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"Miss Tschudi, who has written in a facile way the biographies of many royal personages, Marie Antoinette and others of modern times, here gives, in a popular anecdotic style, the life of the romanticist on the throne whose mind became clouded and who put an end to his own life in 1887."—*The Times.*

"A great many books have been written about Ludwig II. of Bavaria. Madame Clara Tschudi's book adds to the usual sources of information certain personal details, learnt from German friends, who spent their summers in Hobenschwangan, in the seventies and eighties. There will always be a curious fascination about the personality of this mad king; first

because, like Hamlet, he was only mad nor'-nor'-west, and during long intervals of sanity showed himself possessed of remarkable gifts; and, secondly, because he was the friend of Richard Wagner, and did more than any other living man to help the great musician to complete his life's work."—W. L. COURTNEY in *Daily Telegraph.*

"It was only to be expected that so diligent a compiler of romances of crowned heads as the Norwegian chronicler of the lives of Marie Antoinette, Eugénie, Empress of the French, and several others should have fixed on poor Ludwig II. as a subject for another popular compilation. No other monarch of modern time could supply the chronicler with anything like the same effective interest, and the volume has therefore every chance of becoming widely popular."—*The Westminster Gazette.*

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"The acme of picturesque and emotional biography is reached in this engrossing life story which leaves its subject, a gentle lady of sixty-three, tranquilly enjoying her last lonely years amidst the sunshine at Arco."—*The Dundee Advertiser.*

"The book contains some of the best pen portraits of notabilities of the Queen's day that we have seen for some time. Garibaldi's entrance into Naples is one of the most thrilling descriptions, and the account of King Ferdinand's death is a finely-sustained piece of pathetic literature. We heartily recommend *Maria Sophia* to all who love history for history's sake."—*The Southport Visitor.*

LONDON: SWAN SONNENSCHEIN & CO. LTD.

MARIE—LŒTITIA RAMOLINO—BONAPARTE.

FROM THE ORIGINAL PICTURE BY GERARD IN THE VERSAILLES MUSEUM.

NAPOLEON'S MOTHER

BY

CLARA TSCHUDI

AUTHORISED TRANSLATION FROM THE NORWEGIAN

BY

E. M. COPE

With a Coloured Portrait

LONDON

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

No apology can be needed on the part of either author or translator for bringing before the public a sketch of the life of Letitia Bonaparte, whose chequered career is so deeply interesting, and yet so little known. It commends itself to the study of women of all nations and of every cast of thought, while an insight into the character of the mother of a remarkable man, whatever our personal, political, or patriotic feeling may be, ought at the least to awaken our curiosity.

The fact that Napoleon was a terror to every nation of Europe, a veritable scourge of God, need not be ignored by the English reader, whose inherent love of *home* will, however, help him to understand that the conqueror could at the same time be "a mother's pride," and it is mainly in this light that he is to be contemplated in the following sketch.

The translator does not consider herself wanting in loyalty to her own country or in condemnation of the all-absorbing ambition of Napoleon, while publishing the opinions she has translated; they are those of the Norwegian authoress, not her own, and the other side of a position has also points of interest for the historical student. To quote the words of J. A. Symonds: "The translator pretends to no discoveries, has taken no brief for or against the character it is his duty to reproduce."

"Napoleon's Moder" was published at the close of 1898, and has been favourably reviewed in several Norwegian papers, one of which has the gratifying words in reference to the gifted authoress: "Clara Tschudi har formaaet at skabe en bog, som til alle tider vil være underholdende, oplysende og opdragende," which may be rendered: "She has created a work which cannot fail to be entertaining, instructive, and edifying for all time."

Those who have been interested in the English translation of Clara Tschudi's "Marie Antoinette," and that of "Eugénie, Empress of the French," may certainly look for similar enjoyment in the study of "Napoleon's Mother."

E. M. COPE.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Some of my readers will recall my work on Marie Antoinette, in which I described the last days of Louis XV., the stormy reign of Louis XVI., and the Revolution, which washed away in streams of blood every vestige of the old throne and constitution. This book is the first of a series of monographs treating of the women of Napoleon's family, which will form a fitting continuation of my former work, and represent the powerful character that seems to emerge from the Revolution, the great and victorious Emperor.

In "Marie Antoinette," I chose as the centre of my study one single woman, the Queen, who, in spite of her many faults, stood out in the years of her sorrow as an example of patience and courage; but in the sketches which treat of the First Empire, I shall not be able to adopt the same course, as women played a far greater part in the life of Napoleon than people are generally inclined to credit, although not one of them possessed the influence at Court that Louis XVI. conceded to his Consort.

At the same time, the women of the French Empire are not of less interest than the con-

spicuous characters whom we meet with in the closing years of the old Monarchy. I do not allude to the Mistresses of the Emperor, or the clever women like Madame de Stael, who opposed his influence; I am thinking only of the members of his own family, his mother, his attractive wife, Josephine, the Austrian Archduchess, whom he also married, and who, in spite of her personal insignificance, is yet known as the mother of the King of Rome, and for her heartless conduct towards the defeated ruler.

I am thinking, too, of his beautiful frivolous sister Pauline, of Elisa, of designing Caroline, and of his step-daughter and sister-in-law, Queen Hortense, about whom it is my intention to write six biographical studies beginning with the mother, and continuing the series with the early days of Josephine Beauharnais, Josephine as Empress of France, Pauline Borghese and her sisters, Marie Louise and Hortense.

This present work, and the one on the Princess Borghese will naturally touch upon the childhood and early youth of Napoleon. Those on Josephine will treat of the Consulate and the First Empire, and in "Marie Louise" and "Queen Hortense" I intend to consider some of the details connected with the fall of the Empire.

As I particularly wish that each volume shall be complete in itself, I am anxious to avoid

repetitions and allusions in these biographies; there are, therefore, some points respecting Letitia and her children which will be taken in my book on Pauline, while in that, as well as in the work on Queen Hortense, I shall refer to numerous circumstances connected with the Bonaparte family in their exile.

There is but little reference to Letitia in the biographies of her son, and although she was no ordinary woman, she has left so little mark on the history of her day, that many books treating of the Consulate and the Empire almost ignore her; even Thiers' work of twenty volumes has but one page devoted to Napoleon's mother, and her name has been but imperfectly preserved in a few memoirs. We have to rely chiefly on the testimony of her son to understand her character and influence, and even he thought but little of her when in the heyday of his power and glory, though adversity made him realise his indebtedness to her; and her personal courage, her domestic virtues, her patriotism, her care for her children, her modesty in prosperity, and her unshaken resignation under trial place her in the foremost rank among the women of her day. "Never," says the Duchess d'Abrantès, her lady-in-waiting, "did her courage fail her, even in her bitterest sorrows. She is the most remarkable woman I have ever known as regards her strength of mind, her faith in adversity, and her

dignified reserve under the griefs that crushed her to the earth during the last twenty years of her life."

History shews us that there have been few great men without remarkable mothers, from whom they inherited a large share of their genius, virtue, and renown, and Napoleon never hesitated to confess the power of his mother's influence.

Michelet has unjustly remarked that "she seemed to realise all her dreams in her son." Letitia was no "dreamer." Neither is it fair like Stendahl to compare her with women like Cornelia and Portia—the Mother of Napoleon stands alone. She is pre-eminently herself.

I have culled my information about her personality from numerous sources, and a list of the works which have especially assisted me will be found at the end of my book; but I am mainly indebted to the excellent work by Baron Larrey* (Surgeon-in-Chief), and to the valuable archives and documents which I have been allowed to study under kind and intelligent guidance.

It has been my aim to interest my readers in the individuality of Letitia, and few women, in my opinion, have been freer from hypocrisy and pretence than the Mother of Napoleon—there is nothing to add, nothing to alter in her portraiture.

CLARA TSCHUDI.

* "He is the most virtuous man I have known,"—NAPOLEON.

The following is a list of the principal works I consulted while preparing this sketch :—

Galetti : Histoire illustrée de la Corse.
Léonard de Saint-Germain : Itinéraire de la Corse.
Tranchant et Ladimir : Les Femmes Militaires.
Jean de la Rocca : La Corse et son Avenir.
Beauterne : L'enfance de Napoléon.
Masson : Napoléon et sa famille, I., II.
Nisica : Mémoires sur l'enfance et la jeunesse de Napoléon.
Lescure : Les Mères illustres.
Elias Regnault : Histoire de Napoléon.
Turquan : Les Sœurs de Napoléon.
Mémoires de *Napoléon Bonaparte.*
Correspondance de Napoléon I.
Mémoires du Roi *Joseph.*
Lucien Bonaparte et ses Mémoires.
Mémoires et correspondance du roi *Jérôme.*
Correspondance de la reine *Cathérine.*
Mémoires de la Duchesse *d'Abrantès.*
Miot de Melito : Souvenirs du premier Empire.
Larrey : Madame Mère.
L'Abbé Lionnet : Histoire du Cardinal Fesch.
Henri Houssaye : 1814.
Ménéval : Napoléon et Marie Louise.
Amédée Pichot : Napoléon à l'île d'Elbe.
Mademoiselle Cochelet : Memoires sur la Reine Hortense et la famille impériale.
Las Cases : Le Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène.
O'Meara : Napoléon dans l'exil.
Mémoires *d'Antommarchi.*
Scipion Fougasse : Chez une femme illustre.
Saint Hilaire : Souvenirs intimes du temps de l'Empire.
Michelet : Histoire du XIX.'e siècle (Origine des Bonapartes).
Thiers : Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire.
Madame Letizia a Sienna (Estrato della " Nuova Antologia.")
Enrico Mayer : La Vita e i tempi, etc., etc., etc.

C. T.

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CHAPTER XXXI.

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C'est à ma mère, à ses bons principes que je dois ma fortune et tout ce que j'ai du bien ; je n' hésite pas à dire que l'avenir d'un enfant dépend de la mère.

NAPOLEON.

Femme forte et bonne, modèle des mères, combien tes enfants te sont encore redevables des exemples que tu leur a donnés.

JOSEPH BONAPARTE.

La majeure partie de la vie humaine est composée de malheurs et de déboires. Cette connaissance doit nous donner la force de nous raidir contre tout qui peut nous arriver, surtout quand il n'y a pas de notre faute.

LETITIA.

Tomber n'est rien quand ou finit avec noblesse ; tomber est tout quand ou finit avec lâcheté.

LETITIA.

Voilà celle à qui aucun revers, aucune puissance ne peut enlever la gloire d'avoir fait naître l'homme le plus extraordinaire que la suite des siècles ait produit.

HELENE POTOCKA.

CHAPTER I.

The birth, childhood, and position of Letitia.—Her marriage with Carlo Bonaparte.

Maria Letitia Ramolino, the mother of Napoleon the Great, was born at Ajaccio in Corsica, but it is not accurately known in what year. Some biographers affirm that it was in 1736, a calculation that would bring her to the advanced age of a hundred; her lady-in-waiting, the Duchess d'Abrantès, whose mother was the friend of her youth, says that she was born in 1748, and her son Lucien, in his *Mémoires*, speaks of his mother's birthday as August 24th of that year; but other writers maintain that she first saw the light in 1750. The strange difference in these dates is accounted for by the fact that the church registers in Corsica were destroyed in the Civil Wars, and although they were subsequently re-written, it is impossible to rely upon their accuracy. Napoleon caused a search to be made in 1806 for any official

documents relating to his family, but even these were afterwards lost. Time, too, has effaced nearly every incident of Letitia's childhood, but we know for certain that her parents possessed a moderate fortune, and that her grandfather, as well as her father, occupied important positions on the island, which, until 1768, belonged to the Genoese Republic. Her father, Jean Jérôme Ramolino, was at one time a captain in the army, and later on, a general inspector of roads in Corsica. Her mother, Angela Maria di Pietra-Santa, was the daughter of a nobleman in the province of Sartène, the very centre of the vendetta, a rugged, wild district, where the houses were mere huts, from which the inhabitants went forth in armed bands to procure their provisions, and lived in a state of deadly hatred one against the other.

The first issue of this marriage was a daughter, who died at a very early age, and whose birth has probably been mistaken in the church registers for that of her younger sister; there was also one son, who does not appear to have played any part in the life of Letitia. Their father died in 1755, and his widow married, in 1757, Franz Fesch, a captain in the Genoese Marines, who belonged to a distinguished Swiss family, and was an ardent adherent of Zwingli's congregation, but who embraced Roman Catholicism in order to marry the beautiful widow, who

could not be induced to abjure her own faith. Their children were Joseph Fesch, born January 3rd, 1763, and a daughter some years younger, who married a tradesman of Basle, named Bürkly.

Franz Fesch died at an early age, and when Letitia married, she adopted her young half-brother and brought him up as one of her own children. He became celebrated as Cardinal Fesch, and never wavered in grateful attachment to his sister.

Both friends and enemies have rightly concurred in considering Letitia the most beautiful woman in Corsica. She was well formed and of medium height, with particularly pretty, small hands and feet, which her son Napoleon inherited, and lovely teeth, in which all her children resembled her. She had sunny chestnut hair, a good forehead, long black eyelashes, shadowing, not large, but piercing eyes that lighted up the whole face, a fine expressive mouth, and a slightly prominent chin that betokened energy and strength of will. Her nose was well formed and rather long, her ears small and pretty, while her every movement, her carriage and walk, were characterised by inborn grace.

The education of Corsican girls were terribly neglected a hundred years ago, when almost their sole instruction was derived from intercourse with servants, who were far more friendly towards

them than their own mothers, whose duty seemed to consist in scolding on every possible occasion, those who completely overawed their daughters being considered the most capable. This rigorous treatment lasted until an opportunity to marry them presented itself, and it was not till she was wedded that a girl could lay claim to the slightest individuality.

Letitia grew up under the same injudicious management as her companions, and never made good the defects of her faulty education. We learn from her own statement that she was barely thirteen when her mother and step-father began to look about for a suitable husband for her, and believed that they had found one in Carlo di Bonaparte, who, like themselves, belonged to an ancient noble family. The Bonapartes and the Ramolinos had both emigrated to Corsica from North Italy, and the former had held important political positions in Florence, Sarzane, and San Miniato, as well as serving with honour both as soldiers and civil officials.

There was certainly no wide scope for their powers, but the successful exercise of these was sufficient to bring them renown. If anything, the Ramolino family was of higher birth than the Bonapartes, and could trace its descent from the Counts Coll' Alto ; but in many respects the fortunes of the two families were very similar. Neither of them remained in Lombardy, their

native province, nor in Tuscany, to which they afterwards migrated, while traces of their talents and thoroughness are to be met with both in Naples and Genoa, which latter city the Ramolinos left about the close of the 15th century, and removed to Corsica, the existing head of the house having for his wife the daughter of a Genoese Doge, in whose city he had been received with high and honourable distinction.

The Bonapartes did not reach Corsica till towards the close of the 16th century, since which time the two families had lived near each other, had occupied similar municipal appointments, and had frequently intermarried.

It is as difficult to give the exact date of the birth of Carlo Maria di Bonaparte as of that of Letitia, but his eldest son mentions in his *Mémoires* that his father was born in 1740; some maintain that it was in 1744, while 1746 is the date assigned by others.

The young man's grandfather had had three sons: Joseph, Napoleon, and Lucien. Napoleon had only one daughter. Lucien belonged to the priesthood, and Carlo was the only son of Joseph, consequently the family heir. Like Letitia Ramolino he lost his father at a very early age, but his uncle Lucien, at that time Archdeacon of Ajaccio, took charge of him and treated him like a son. At the age of fourteen, he was sent by his uncle to the High School in Corte, to

which Pascal Paoli had given the proud name of "University," though it possessed but five teachers, all monks. Here the boy gained the personal friendship of Paoli, who received him into his own house, to be rewarded by the laudatory Latin verses of the boy, proclaiming him the deliverer of Corsica.

But he did not remain here long, as it had always been the custom in the Bonaparte family that the sons should be sent to Italy for their finishing studies, and it was at the University of Pisa that Carlo prepared to pass his examinations in law. His means were very small, but he had considerable ability, and enough conceit and will to ensure success; he was besides good-looking, in the style of Louis XV., tall, with regular refined features full of expression, and a faultless carriage and bearing. When in Italy, he was always called "Conte di Bonaparte," and the old title flattered his vanity and conceit. While in Pisa he became acquainted with a charming girl of good means, Signorina Alberti, and in the conviction that his personal qualities alone would ensure him a well-dowered wife, he confidently sought her hand, but the lady's father considered that the prospects of the young lawyer were too insecure, and refused his consent to the engagement. About the same time, while he was enjoying himself and making love in Italy, Carlo received a letter from his uncle, in which he was urged to return to Ajaccio,

where the Archdeacon had been busy with matrimonial schemes for his adopted son, who at first was unwilling to obey the summons, until the ever more and more persistent refusals of Alberti to give him his daughter finally induced him to return home, where he was warmly welcomed by Lucien, who lost not a moment in telling him about the lovely and wealthy Letitia, and the day following his arrival they set out together to call upon Captain Fesch and his family.

There is but little doubt that Carlo loved Signorina Alberti's money far more than herself, and it is quite certain that he quickly forgot her in the presence of the ravishing beauty of Signorina Ramolino, and became passionately in love with the young girl provided for him by his uncle. But there was one point against the marriage that troubled Letitia's mother, who like all the Ramolinos for centuries, was in full sympathy with the Genoese, the lords of the island, while the Bonapartes loudly declared themselves the friends and adherents of Paoli, the leader of the Independent Party. But as the match was a thoroughly suitable one in every other respect, neither she nor her husband were disposed to reject what they had wished from the very first.

Early marriages are usual in Corsica, but when Carlo expressed his wish to be united to Letitia immediately after their engagement, his uncle

thought him a little too precipitate; still, as the passion of the young man was even stronger than it had been for the Pisan beauty a few weeks previously, and as he declared that if the ceremony were not performed at once he would take his *fiancée* home without the consent of his guardian, the Archdeacon was compelled to yield, and united the couple a few days later, but the exact date is not to be found in any Corsican archives, though in the memoirs of several of the children, June 2nd, 1754, is mentioned as the wedding day of their parents.

CHAPTER II.

The Bonapartes in Corte.—Birth of Joseph Bonaparte.—The Father Confessor in Bastia.

THE condition of Corsica had been one of unrest and agitation for more than ten years at the time of Letitia's marriage, when the population of the whole island, under the leadership of Paoli, had been struggling for freedom, and it had only been by the help of France that the Italian Republic had managed to retain a few strongholds. The Senate at Genoa was at length convinced that Corsica was as good as lost, and offered to sell their rights to France, to whom it was ceded May 15th, 1768, thus imperilling the cause of independence among the islanders, who became greatly alarmed at the news of the treaty between the two powers, and immediately summoned a Council in Corte, when Carlo Bonaparte resolved to take up his residence in the town, which at that time was the seat of government. His young wife keenly felt the separation from the ancestral home

and all her relations, as well as from the circle of merry girls who had been her companions.

* Corte is a very old town, considerably less than Ajaccio, and much more gloomy in appearance; it was the capital of the Moorish Kings in the ninth century, and had frequently played a part in history, on account of a fortress in its neighbourhood which was the cause and scene of constant disputes.

Carlo took a house which had formerly belonged to the celebrated patriot leader Gaffori during the Genoese wars, the walls of which still bore traces of the fire of the assailants, and its general dilapidated condition painfully depressed his poor young wife. Still the surroundings were not less beautiful than those to which she had been accustomed, and when the longing for home was very strong, she sought for comfort in the beauties of nature, on the steep wooded slopes that surround the town. She was a mere child at the time of her marriage, and before she was nineteen, she had brought four children into the world, which had either been still-born, or had barely breathed.

January 7th, 1768, an exceedingly beautiful, healthy child, the eldest of the sons who lived,

* "Its position is admirable. Seated nearly in the centre of the island in the heart of an elevated plateau, and surrounded by lofty mountains, with a bold insulated rock for the base of its almost impregnable fortress, a valley of exuberant fertility watered by two rivers, it seems formed to be the capital of an island kingdom."

was born in Corte, Joseph, who subsequently became King of Naples, then of Spain.

We have seen that her husband had espoused the cause of Paoli, and here in Corte he associated with the leading men of the town, and acquired for himself a fair position as a lawyer at the early age of twenty-four. He was elected a member of the Council, and the eloquence which he displayed in favour of his country's independence exercised such a striking influence over his hearers, in spite of many youthful extravagances of expression, that Paoli entrusted him with several public commissions, and made him his secretary. The young couple often spent the evening at the General's house, and he enjoyed playing "reversi" with Madame, although he was invariably the loser. Years afterwards he used to say with a smile: "Reversi has become part of the very life and being of Signora Letitia."

Bonaparte, who was fond of luxury and display, expected his house to be maintained on a footing that was neither in keeping with his income nor in accordance with the tastes of his wife. He liked to see friends at his table, but failed to provide the money needful to meet expenses, and his thoughtless, easy good-nature, forced Letitia to retrench very closely in their home expenditure. But a Corsican wife is trained to be submissive to her husband, and although his extravagance was distasteful to her

nature, she could only counteract it—for a time, at least—by parsimony which became second nature, and was a reproach to her to the end of her life She found pleasure in home and family surroundings, but Carlo required her to go into society; he was proud of her beauty, and wished it to be seen and admired by all. In spite of the tinge of severity in her character at this period, she was far from being the austere, serious woman known to France and Italy at a later date, and had her moments of youthful buoyancy. There was only one lady on the island who could equal her in beauty, and that was her friend, the lovely Madame de Permon, who was about her own age, and almost as attractive in appearance, though they were so perfectly different that mutual jealousy was an impossibility. The daughter of Madame de Permon says in her *Mêmoires* that Madame Bonaparte was more beautiful than her mother, but that the latter had been more thoroughly educated. She adds: "Madame Bonaparte was certainly more attractive than my mother in society, she was more clever and original, although less correct than Madame de Permon, and she had far greater powers of fascination owing to her extreme loveliness." Once when an embassy arrived from Tunis, in order to honour and entertain his foreign guests, Paoli invited the most beautiful women in the island to meet them at a magnificent fête, and it

was here, the battle-field for feminine ambition, that Letitia celebrated her first triumphs, for she was the loveliest of the lovely, the most brilliant of the group. The other ladies were cruelly jealous, accused her of unseemly conduct, and even circulated libellous letters about her reputation.

Two months after the birth of her eldest son, she went to Bastia, where she spent Holy Week, during which time the Bishop called upon the ladies of the town to set a good example to the lower classes by confessing before Easter. Letitia, who was a zealous Roman Catholic, hastened to obey and knelt at the confessional, where she could not see the priest; but as he contemplated the beauty of the unknown penitent, he lost all control over his own passions, and addressed immoral questions to her. At first she did not even understand and could not reply. The confessor repeated his loathsome insinuations; then she rose from her knees, stood proud and erect before him, and said with a loud voice in the Corsican dialect: "My father, you are forgetting what is befitting."

The angry priest, irritated by her daring, threatened to withhold absolution, to which she replied with scorn:

"You are at liberty to do so, but if you refuse, I will publish your conduct to all present." The church was full, and the abashed confessor hastened to pronounce his absolution.

CHAPTER III.

Letitia during the struggle for freedom in Corsica.

THE Genoese had hardly sold their rights over Corsica to France before the king began to look upon the island as his own province, but much obstinate resistance was to be exercised before Louis XV. could claim it for his own, and the local government began by sending a protest against incorporation with France to every sovereign in Europe. Then came the War of Independence, when Corsicans swore to each other that they would fight to their last breath for their freedom.

Confidence in the popular leader went hand in hand with a universal spirit of devotion. A widow gave her husband's pistols to her only son, as she exclaimed :

"Paoli is in danger! Haste to his assistance!"

Another took her boy to the General, saying :

"I had three sons, two have died for their country, and I bring you the last."

Carlo Bonaparte became involved in the dangerous struggle, and his wife accompanied him with matchless devotion, riding by his side and sharing his hardships and dangers through the wild uncultivated island, her refined feminine beauty looking strangely out of keeping with the adventurous warlike spirit that urged her forwards; though the strong and courageous expression of her countenance and the flashing gleam of her eyes betokened the firm endurance of her will. On horse or mule back, even on foot, pursuing and pursued, passing deep ravines, climbing up through woods and thickets, or scaling rocks, she never lost her courage or enthusiasm. Her son Napoleon said in reference to her share in this fight for liberty:

"She encountered privation and fatigue; nothing daunted her; she had the head of a man, though the body of a woman."

Hostilities had begun early in 1768 and continued until the close of the year, when the French commander saw himself compelled to beg Paoli for a truce, and resigned his position as leader of the attack, towards the close of December. But the French Government had no intention of relinquishing the struggle, and fresh well-organised troops were sent to the island in 1769 under the command of General

de Vaux, which roused serious thoughts in the mind of Paoli as to the advisability of prolonging the war against a powerful kingdom. He knew that the freedom of his country was gone, but he would have preferred to see the island under the rule of England than submissive to France. Bonaparte ranked among the most ardent of patriots, not one of whom had any suspicion that their leader was forming plans with reference to England, and on the return of spring the war was renewed with increased vigour.

Letitia was ready as before to accompany her husband to battle, in spite of her pregnancy, and bore the fatigue of the campaign without a murmur, spending whole nights under the open sky, and spurring on the waning courage of her companions by her own dauntlessness, as she exclaimed :

"All our strength belongs to Corsica ; let us fight to the last man, and conquer or die!"

In later years, when her son had become Emperor of the French, she enjoyed recounting the warlike experiences of her youth, and used to say :

"I carried my Napoleon under my heart with the same calm pleasure that I felt when I afterwards held him in my arms and fed him at my breast. My thoughts were occupied solely with his father and the fate of Corsica, and to gain news of the army, I often left the safety of our

mountain recesses and ventured on to the very scene of action, where I heard the balls whistling round my ears, without a shadow of fear, as I trusted to the protection of the Holy Virgin."

With Carlo Bonaparte by his side and at the head of his picked men, Paoli rushed forward to meet the enemy, Letitia riding with them, *enceinte* as she was with the future hero of the century.

The two armies came face to face May 3rd, 1769, near Monte Borgo, when a salvo of artillery gave the signal to begin the fight. In spite of inferior weapons, the Corsicans opposed such a determined resistance that they were able to repulse the superior forces of the enemy; but the encounter at Murato was less happy, in spite of the courageous onslaught of the Corsicans. Many women supplemented the efforts of the men, but the Royalists were too strong for them and the islanders had to submit. Letitia was unable to join the actual fighters, though she was on the field, and in the heat of the conflict became separated from her husband and friends, whom she afterwards found, and encouraged by her enthusiasm to struggle on to the very last.

A few days later, May 9th, a decisive battle took place in the neighbourhood of Ponte-Nuovo, when the forces of the French were again superior in numbers, so that in spite of the courage of the Corsicans and the military

efficiency of Paoli, they were either overpowered or put to flight, performing prodigies of valour, even during their retreat to their mountain fastnesses. One of the dying soldiers said to Paoli :

"In a moment I shall be with those who have perished for their country. Help my old father, Paoli."

It was at Ponte-Nuovo, that a French officer asked of a wounded Corsican :

"Where is your doctor ? "

"We have none," answered the soldier.

"What becomes of you then ? "

"We die."

The bloody battle of Ponte-Nuovo marks the close of this unequal contest, and the death-blow to the liberty of Corsica, as well as the severance between Paoli and such of his adherents who favoured a union with England, and those who preferred submission to France. Several hundred families sought refuge among the rocks and caves of Monte Rotondo, the highest mountain of the island, about half a day's journey from Corte, among whom were Carlo Bonaparte, his wife, and their one-year old child, Joseph.

A narrow sheep-walk leads through primeval forests over black, barren inaccessible rocks to the summit of the mountain, which is covered with eternal snow. Here and there are deep fissures in which the shepherds shelter in stormy weather,

and on the way to Monte Rotondo may still be seen the "Fugitives' Grotto," where the mother of Napoleon and her companions in misfortune found a hiding-place on their flight after the battle of Ponte-Nuovo.

The situation was appalling. The aged, women, children, and men, who feared to fall into the conquerors' hands, were almost without food in this desolate region, and most of them felt that their last hour had come. After a few days, suspense, a French officer was seen on a height waving a flag of truce; he told them that the island had surrendered, that Paoli had resolved to embark for England, and that they could all safely return to their homes. Bonaparte, with his wife and child, tried to descend into the province of Niolo in order to enter on the difficult route to Ajaccio, where he again intended to reside. He placed himself at the head of the returning fugitives, while Letitia, holding her little son in her arms, was happily able to procure a horse; but they had to take a narrow path close to the fordless river Liamone, whose banks had overflowed under a strong current. Her horse lost his footing, slipped in the water, and was carried along by the stream. Fearful shrieks reached her from her companions, who had shouted to her to cling to the horse and try to swim to land; but the intrepid horsewoman kept herself erect in the saddle, pressed her child

closer to her breast, encouraged the animal with kind words, and with skilful guiding reached the shore, unharmed.

For one moment her husband had thought of accompanying Paoli in his exile, but his uncle's remonstrances, and the entreaties of his wife, induced him to abandon the plan; but it was at Letitia's suggestion that Bonaparte and some other of the General's friends accompanied Paoli to Vecchio, where the heroic champion of the island embarked on an English vessel which took him to Leghorn.

CHAPTER IV.

Birth and Childhood of Napoleon.

Paoli was an exile, Corsica was French, and peace reigned on the island, when glorious sunshine ushered in the 15th of August, 1769. The altars of every church were decorated with flowers, and boughs hung in every house to celebrate the Assumption of the Virgin. Bells were heard on all sides, and the inhabitants of Ajaccio were on foot from early morning, as well as crowds of holiday folk in their Sunday best, all trooping to honour the Blessed Virgin. The cathedral portals stood wide open, and among the worshippers there passed in a young, attractive woman, Signora Maria Letitia Bonaparte, holding by the hand a little boy about six years old, her half-brother and adopted son, Joseph Fesch.

The exertions of the recent campaign, and the hardships of her flight, had left no trace on

her lovely countenance, and she felt thankful and happy on her way to hear High Mass, and to pray for strength in her coming trial.

During the ceremony, as she was kneeling before a picture of the Madonna, she was seized with violent pain, which she hoped to be able to bear quietly until the conclusion of the service; but nervous anxiety, which increased with every minute, seemed to overwhelm her, and she hastily left the church, to emerge into the full blaze of the midday sun and hasten through the streets, unmindful of the greetings of passing acquaintances. Her home was happily not far from the church and she crossed the threshold, but had not time to reach her room. The child was born "on a very little pallet bed, hardly higher than a couch," a boy with a big head, and an intelligent face, who screamed outrageously, and this was Napoleon.

Several historians speak of tapestry on which he was laid immediately after his birth, which represented the Conquests of Alexander the Great and Julius Cæsar; but in the *Mémoires* which his mother dictated in her old age, she emphatically contradicts this, and says:

"We had no tapestry in our Corsican home, not even in winter, therefore certainly not in the height of summer."

She began by nursing her son herself, but was soon obliged to send for a Corsican *nourrice*,

Camilla Ilari, a peasant with singularly ugly face, but of an iron constitution, whom the child dearly loved, and proved so useful that Letitia kept her for many years. Camilla was devoted to Napoleon, whom she called "her little one, her Nabulionello," in her soft Ajaccian, and would not allow him to be contradicted, so that he was continually at war with the housekeeper, Caterina Mamucia, a domineering hypocritical woman, who was for ever scolding the child. Violent altercations were of daily occurrence between the *nourrice* and the housekeeper, when the former would say to her opponent: "Go and say your prayers, and don't interfere in the management of my little one, it is no business of yours!" Camilla Ilari was not the only person with whom Caterina Mamucia was continually quarrelling, she wrangled and disputed with every member of the household, except with Signora Letitia, whom she almost worshipped. But the skirmishes between her and Bonaparte's mother, who resided with the young couple, were of the most frequent occurrence.

The old lady was a thoroughly pious woman, and Letitia related, not without a touch of irony, that after each of her daughter-in-law's confinements, she felt it her duty to hear a daily mass on behalf of the child, and as eight children were born during the life-time of the elder Signora Bonaparte, the conscientious grandmother found herself obliged to be present at nine masses a

day, one for the salvation of her own soul, and eight for that of her son's children.

After a few years, sharp-tongued Caterina was replaced by a new housekeeper, Minona Saveria, who accompanied the family to France, remained with her mistress all through her exile in Italy, and died in her service in Rome in 1825. She was just as faithful, true, and devoted as her predecessor, but perhaps her greatest virtue in the eyes of Letitia was her extraordinary economy, which was almost too severe, and the eagerness to please and support her housekeeper in this point probably contributed to spread the report of the extreme parsimony of the Emperor's mother.

Saveria was loved and valued by the whole family. Lucien called her "a pearl," and the Emperor gave her an annuity for life.

Napoleon was far from nice-looking in his early childhood, and his enormous head seemed too heavy for his feeble body to hold upright. He was not baptised until he was two years old, July 21st, 1771, a month after the birth of a little sister, and as she was a delicate baby, the Archdeacon allowed them both to be baptised privately at home. For more than two hundred years it had been customary to christen the second son of the family Napoleon, which means "lion of the desert," and the fact that Carlo's uncle of that name had been killed at the battle

of Ponte-Nuovo gave an additional reason for the parents to hand on the name to their son. The little girl was christened Maria Anna. Letitia had impressed on her two-year-old son that he must kneel during the prayers preceding the actual ceremony, but when the priest approached to sprinkle the water on his head, he shrieked, "No! no!" and struggled while the water trickled all over him; finally, he struck the priest, his godfather and godmother, and all within reach, with the exception of his parents.

Thanks to the unremitting care of Letitia and his nurse, the child gradually became stronger in health, but he was violent, domineering, and dogged; his mother being the only person whom he feared and obeyed, and when he was five years old, she sent him to a girls' school in the hope that it would soften his passionate nature. For a time he was quite happy with his small companions and formed a friendship with little Giacominetta, a good-natured child, about his own age, but the elder girls became jealous and jeered at them; this roused the wrath of the boy, who seized a stick, and drove them from the spot. The schoolmistress complained to Letitia of the behaviour of her dreadful child, when the mother took him home, and administered a sound whipping as punishment for his unknightly conduct.

"When I was quite little," he related while at

St. Helena, "I was terribly quarrelsome. I feared nobody, and fought or scratched continually. It was well for me that I soon left home, or Mamma Letitia would have quelled all my warlike inclinations, for she would never have yielded to my naughtiness; she was severe and impartial, indulgent to the good, but inflexible when punishing the wrong-doer."

On another occasion Napoleon said:

"It is to my mother, to her good precepts and upright example, that I owe my success and any great thing that I have accomplished." And elsewhere he exclaimed: "I owe everything to my mother."

Letitia had no help in the bringing up of her children from her husband or her mother-in-law. They were foolishly indulgent, troubled at their least cry or whimper, and nullified every needful correction by their untimely caresses. Letitia, from whom we have these details, adds:

"I was indulgent or severe, according to the need of the case. My children never failed to honour and obey me, or to treat me with love and deference." She was devoted to them, and there was not one of her large family who ever spoke disrespectfully of her.

"You are very good to me," said Napoleon to his physician in St. Helena, "and you shrink from no effort to alleviate my sufferings, but this is nothing compared with maternal tenderness."

Her son Joseph once exclaimed:

"You strong, good woman! Model among mothers! What do we not owe to the example which you have set us!"

She brought them up in strict Corsican fashion and never overlooked a fault. Napoleon objected to go to church on Sundays, but a couple of boxes on the ear soon reduced him to submission. On one occasion she had gone out with a friend; when turning round at some distance from the house, before descending a steep path, she spied her second son following her. She was angry that he had dared to come without permission, ran back and gave him such a violent box on the ear that the child fell and rolled down the slope. He got up crying and rubbing both his eyes with his small fists, but Letitia paid no heed to him, and calmly went on her way.

There was a fine fig-tree in the vineyard which the children were forbidden to touch, but one day Napoleon climbed up by himself, plucked the fruit, ate as much as he could, and while stuffing his pockets, was surprised by the gardener, as he hung clutching a branch in terror.

As soon as he could get down, he entreated the man not to betray him, but the mistress, on coming the following morning to gather her figs and finding fewer than she expected, made

inquiries of the gardener, who told her that Napoleon had been there enjoying the fruit. She had no sooner entered the house than a rod was heard to dance merrily on the back of the little culprit.

Another day he made fun of his grandmother, who was in the habit of leaning on a stick as she walked, and said that she was like a witch. His mother happened to hear the remark and looked sternly at the child, who contrived to keep out of her way until towards evening, then when she seized him to administer condign punishment the boy escaped from her grasp. The following morning he greeted his mother and prepared to embrace her as usual, but she had not forgotten the punishment that was due, and pushed him from her. Later on in the day, she told him that he was invited to dine with one of their relations in town, and he went up to his room to get ready. Madame Letitia followed him, found him changing his clothes and fastened the door behind her, after which the young man had to submit to a flogging which was none the less severe that he had managed to evade it for a whole day.

In his early childhood, Napoleon had had a playfellow in the little sister two years his junior, with whom he had been baptised, and whom he dearly loved; but she died when he was seven years old, and his elder brother Joseph became his sole companion. His sisters, who were six,

eight, and nine years younger than himself, hardly came into his life until many years later.

In order that the children might have space in which they could make as much noise and mess as they liked, Letitia had taken every article of furniture out of one of the largest rooms in the house, and here they amused themselves as they pleased in their spare time, or when the weather was very bad. Joseph and the younger brothers liked to hop round and draw grotesque figures of sprawling men on the walls, but Napoleon, who was the happy possessor of a drum and a wooden sword given him by his mother, never drew anything but soldiers in battle array. His remarkable talent for figures was soon apparent, and the nuns in Ajaccio used to call him the "Mathematician"; they often gave him cakes and sweets, of which the child was naturally very fond.

One day, a procession of devout nuns, deep in prayer, was solemnly crossing the market place. Napoleon saw them coming, ran towards them, and shouted at the top of his voice:

> "Celui qui veut savoir ou est mon cœur,
> Le trouvera au milieu des seins des sœurs."

A fat nun, very weak on her legs, Sister Orso, reproved him, but Napoleon only repeated the lines in a higher key, and would not cease until she gave him some sweets.

After a somewhat ignominious termination to his school life among little girls, Letitia sent him to a seminary kept by Jesuits, at some distance from their house, and before he left in the morning, she gave him a piece of wheaten bread for his lunch. One day some friends told her that they had frequently seen her boy Napoleon running about the streets eating soldiers' bread, which they considered very vulgar for a child in his position. When she scolded him, he answered that he was in the habit of exchanging his wheaten bread every morning for a piece of soldiers' bread, which he preferred.

As he grew older, he developed such zeal and interest in studies, especially mathematics, that his mother had a little room arranged for him on the terrace in front of the house, where he could work undisturbed by his brothers. Here he would pass whole days, just going out in the evening, when he walked in the streets in perfect unconsciousness of all around him, and of his own personal appearance.

There were even times when he forgot to fasten his stockings, which gave rise to the following lines, remembered in Ajaccio even at the present day :

"Napolione di mezza calzetta
Fa l'amore a Giacominetta."

(Napoleon, with his stockings about his heels, makes love to Giacominetta.)

CHAPTER V.

Corsican Manners and Customs—Home of the Bonapartes—Character of Carlo Bonaparte—Dissimilarity between husband and wife—General Marbœuf—Carlo's instability—Letitia's domestic virtues.

SINCERE love for his family is a strong feature in the Corsican character; every man is devoted to his own, though he rarely shows it by any outward sign of consideration or tenderness, and in no other place are the rights of the first-born more rigidly respected. When the father dies, the eldest son becomes the head of the family and the guardian of his younger brothers and sisters. A Corsican never forgets a kindness, he is hospitable and welcomes a stranger with open arms. Theft is a rare occurrence, the people have a horror of injustice, and their courage is proverbial. They are mostly short of stature, with good eyes and teeth; easily contented, satisfied with frugal fare, chestnuts and olives, and the water of their brooks.

Up to 1770 they had only one species of coin. The men's clothes were then of brown woollen stuff, spun and made up by their wives at home; and we have seen that they opposed the French in two campaigns, without a garrisoned fortress, without artillery, without money, and without the material of war. The victors spoke with respect of these courageous little men in brown cloaks, whose resistance was so calm and strong, who were inured to hardships, and could bear the bitterest privations without a murmur.

The women—those at least in the country districts—wore long gowns, the bodice and skirt in one, with an embroidered chemisette covering the neck and bosom; they were always bare-headed, except for a kerchief knotted under the chin. They worked extremely hard, and even wives of well-to-do citizens had to fetch water for the use of the house.

The Corsicans despised their women, and even as late as the beginning of the nineteenth century, wives had to take their meals with the servants, never at the same table as their husbands. The riches of a man were estimated in proportion to the sons that he had, and parents were far more lavish of their affection to these than to their daughters.

The Bonaparte family inhabited a house of their own on the square market place of Ajaccio, now called "Place Letizia." It contained many

spacious apartments and a ball room, all the floors of which were inlaid with red hexagonal tiles in true Corsican fashion, and the roof of the house served as a balcony.

Here they spent the winter, but in the summer they removed to "Villa Milelli," situated close to the sea towards Les Iles Sanguinaires, about seven miles from the city. The comfortable little country house stood in a garden, sweet with the scent of pomegranates, or myrtle and roses; and from the wooded mountain chain close at hand rose one single barren peak, a cavern in which was converted into a summer house by Letitia and became the favourite retreat of Napoleon, when, as a young officer in France, he could spend his furlough with his family and pursue his favourite studies.

Signora Bonaparte was fond of her summer home, and early in the morning, while the little ones were still asleep, she used to walk in the shady garden, and again late in the evening, under the starry sky, breathing the soft cool air, listening to the ripple of the waves. And these hours were among the pleasantest of her life, those at night especially, when the perfect quiet calmed her nerves. Her noisy, high-spirited children, coupled with the cares of housekeeping, allowed her but few moments of repose during "the heat and burden of the day."

The Bonapartes were far from rich, and Carlo

was less well off than his wife. Signorina Ramolino, who was considered to have a large fortune, received about 7000 livres on her marriage; but this capital was locked up in a house in the city, in property in the country, and in a vineyard. There is not much money in Corsica, and then, as now, the people paid their taxes and farm-rents in kind.

Letitia's mother and Bonaparte's uncle considered that the young people were suited to each other; but in reality, it is difficult to conceive two natures more completely dissimilar. Carlo was ambitious, restless, vain, and ostentatious; while it would be almost impossible to find a more retiring, modest, contented woman than Letitia, whose character was singularly simple, straightforward, and frank. Her husband was more than careless in his expenses, for he spared neither lies nor cunning to get money, which he squandered immediately; and in order to celebrate the passing of his final examinations, he gave a banquet which cost 6000 livres—about double his yearly income. As it was difficult for him to meet this expense, he even thought of selling his wife's vineyard, "La Sposata," in which, according to Napoleon, grew the most delicious grapes.

Letitia hated extravagance and felt an intense tormenting sense of shame which she could hardly define, in the knowledge of her husband's recklessness in money matters, while her strong

feeling of independence made her dread failure of means almost more than anything else. Carlo was fond of talking, and using a whole stream of boastful and empty, though well-sounding words. He was always full of new ideas and projects, which were incessantly abandoned for others before they were carried out, as his restless brain conceived something else, and while working at this he would again lose heart, and embark on yet another scheme. In a word, he had neither perseverance nor stability.

Letitia, on the contrary, was thoughtful, slower in her grasp of things, but constant to the very end, when once she was convinced of the righteousness of her purpose. Carlo was a freethinker, and had in his early youth written verses of a blasphemous nature; it was not till death was near at hand that he became a believer His wife was all her life a pious Roman Catholic, even "austerely religious," who prayed to God and adored the Holy Virgin, to whom she dedicated all her girls, and had them christened Maria. On being asked in her declining years how it had been possible to bear all the buffetings and trials that had oppressed her, she replied: "I bore everything because it was sent me by God."

Carlo was a *bon viveur* and addicted to wine, while Letitia had no appreciation of the pleasures of the table; she drank nothing but water, ate

sparingly and hastily, and despised all creature comforts.

Her husband was proud of his old name and ancestors, but Letitia cared little for these in themselves, though she was anxious to maintain and transmit their illustrious virtues. She identified herself with the middle classes, and even the later fact that she was the mother of an Emperor and three Kings, had no influence on her real feelings.

Bonaparte was one of the foremost in Corsica to recognise the enormous advantage that would accrue to the island by a union with France, and used to say :

"I was a true patriot and faithful adherent of Paoli as long as the National Government existed ; it has been abolished, and now we are Frenchmen. Long live the King!"

The instances in his wife's family had stimulated him to cast in his lot with the victors without delay, and as both Ramolino and Fesch, the husbands of his mother-in-law, had served the Genoese with profit to themselves, he thought that his knowledge as a lawyer and his facility in the French language might procure him a ucrative post in France. He therefore let it be known at once that he could be counted among the most reliable Corsican adherents to the French though there is nothing to prove the sincerity of his devotion to his new country, and

perhaps, in his heart, he deplored the sacrifice of the independence of the island to the interests of a powerful kingdom. He thought of his own personal advantage, as a married man with a yearly increasing family, without a permanent position or fixed income, yet at the same time irresistibly influenced by extravagant tastes. He was aware that he must be a man of birth in order to further his views, and while in Italy he had used his titles of nobility; but as the rights of aristocracy were unrecognised in Corsica, he had never taken the trouble to study his real rank, or to master the details of his family tree. Now it was advisable to verify his position, and he was the first on the island to speculate about certain institutions in France to assist poor nobles, the first to inquire about good appointments open to men of birth, and the first to perceive that promotion might be the reward of standing in favour with the French Government. His initial move was to flatter the King's Commissioner, then, what was even more important, to win the favour of the Governor, Count Marbœuf, which at first seemed very doubtful, but the elderly Frenchman took to the young man, and the two soon became intimate friends.

Bonaparte persuaded his wife to call upon the Count, who received her with all the courtesy of an old noble, and subsequently became a frequent guest in the lawyer's house, where he spent many

hours in the society of Letitia. The deputy-governor, Comte Rosel de Beaumanoir, often invited the aristocracy to evening entertainments, which Bonaparte always attended; though his wife, who was much occupied with domestic duties and disliked the excitement of society, rarely accompanied him; but when she did appear, she fascinated all present by her winning countenance, her grace and dignity, which attracted universal attention the moment she entered the room.

Evil tongues at one time maintained that there was illicit intercourse between her and Marbœuf, and it was even said that Napoleon was the fruit of this liaison.

The report of Letitia's flighty conduct emanated from the party which Carlo Bonaparte had forsaken, who circulated scandalous reasons as the cause of his withdrawal.

At the time of Napoleon's birth the acquaintance with the Governor had hardly begun, and besides, nothing can justify a belief in the veracity of her enemies. All her children bore both moral and physical indications of their descent; they resembled each other in character, mind, habits, and temperament, while most of them inherited the delicacy of their father.

The Corsican lawyer had begun by making himself indispensable to the Governor, who substantially requited the devotion of his young

friend, and Carlo, with "his pretty talent for verse-making," eulogised the public and private exploits of Marbœuf in Italian and Latin stanzas, invited him to become godfather to Louis Bonaparte, and hung his portrait in a conspicuous place in the drawing-room. At this time the Count was turned sixty, and Letitia about twenty, strikingly beautiful in spite of her annual confinements; but her loveliness was of the cold, impassive type, more calculated to rouse admiration than passion. She was utterly without sentimentality or imagination, and her proud, severe, though beautiful countenance, her assiduity in all household matters, her constant pregnancy, the presence and protection of her children, all made her a *wife*, not a mistress.

It must also be noticed in support of her virtue, that under the Empire, when still a lovely woman, there was no sign of coquetry about her; the intercourse with courtiers gave her no satisfaction, and the excitements of society had not the slightest charm for her.

That Marbœuf admired the beautiful Letitia is quite another matter, and more than probable. It is quite certain that she had great influence over him, which she was often asked to exert by those who were anxious to obtain a favour from him, and her own connections not infrequently worried her in this respect. As Madame Mère she related the following to the ladies of her court:

She had an aunt who was a great invalid and daily expected to die, after having received the last sacraments with edifying devotion. Signora Bonaparte was one day standing by the bedside of the sufferer, who in an almost inaudible voice entreated her niece to use her influence with Marbœuf to obtain a great favour. Next to her entrance into Paradise, for which she hoped through Divine Mercy, she longed for nothing more ardently than that her dust might repose in the vaults under the Cathedral of Ajaccio, with that of the holy men of the island who were there awaiting their resurrection. Letitia was unwilling to refuse the request of her dying relative, and hastened to the Governor, who rejected the petition because it was opposed to the rules of the church ; but he permitted Signora Bonaparte to encourage hope in her aunt, who then passed happily and contentedly away.

" Now that she is dead," said the Governor, " it will be quite immaterial to her whether she enjoys the coveted privilege or not."

If relations were so ready to abuse the favour in which she stood with the Governor, we can easily conceive that her own husband was not remiss in claiming a share of the privilege, and it was owing to the influence of Marbœuf that Bonaparte was appointed King's Counsellor on the island. In virtue of his rank, he was a member of the Estates, or Consultative Chamber

of Corsica, and was also nominated one of the Committee of Twelve Gentlemen, "an empty honour," who were to exercise authority in the absence of the Estates. In addition to these offices, he strained every nerve to get appointed one of a deputation to be sent to France, and succeeded. On the death of Louis XV., Marbœuf had been summoned to the new King, leaving the conduct of affairs in the hands of the Vicomte Narbonne-Pelet, who persisently strove to suppress every tendency to independence among the islanders. In his despatches to France, he vehemently censured the leniency of the Count towards the people, and it was thought by many that he himself would be appointed Governor. On the arrival of the deputation in Paris, each member was questioned concerning Marbœuf and Narbonne, when Bonaparte advocated the old Count's cause with such warmth that his friend retained the post, in spite of his rival.

But Narbonne was not without friends and adherents, who did not hesitate to express their bitter condemnation concerning the intimacy of Carlo and his beautiful wife with the Governor.

The journey to France proved of great advantage to Bonaparte, who was good-looking, noble by birth, intelligent, and well-informed, and possessed too of incalculable superiority over his countrymen by his knowledge of French, for very

few of the officials understood Italian. It is quite possible that his letters and papers were full of strange turns and expressions; but still, he wrote and spoke the language with sufficient accuracy to be understood. He began by suggesting the laying out of nursery gardens on the island, the oversight of which should be entrusted to him; and the coustruction of salt works, the control of which should also be placed in his hands. But nothing could really satisfy him, he was incessantly dreaming of fresh undertakings and new plans that were to prove more lucrative and advantageous, or of posts that would ensure a brilliant future to himself and his family. He held the threads of at least twenty schemes for his own private advantage, to be launched at the expense of the State, under his superintendence, and wrote countless letters and petitions, in humble language when it was important to him to gain his ends, and almost imperious, if he could allege the slightest shadow of right on his side.

It was not only from the French Government that he thought to feather his own nest; he never lost a chance elsewhere, though no sooner had he grasped a desired object, than he hurled it from him to pursue some other aim he had in view. He became involved in countless lawsuits, and his financial position grew worse from day to day, while the future teemed with anxiety for his poor

wife. A dispute with the Jesuits about the Milelli property, which he had inherited from his grandfather, dragged on wearily with heavy expense, though he had but faint hope of winning his suit. He was smarting under wounded pride, his love of ostentation could not brook the poverty of his home, and traces of the fatal malady of which he was to die were already apparent; so that it is probable his indecision, his incessant change of opinion, his increasing irritability, and his restless longing to travel were all induced by disease. Alleging as an excuse that he wanted to realise some new dream or other, he set out to visit Genoa, Pisa, Florence, Rome, Bastia, Corte, Marseilles, Versailles, with his brain full of schemes which incessantly spurred him on and made him feel the urgency of procuring more and more money for his own personal use.

His head-quarters were at Ajaccio, the home of his ever-increasing family, where his wife's existence was far from an easy one. In spite of her constant pregnancy, it was upon her that rested the daily care for her numerous children, her mother-in-law, and her husband's crippled uncle Lucien, who now formed part of the household. The Archdeacon had been a martyr to gout since he was thirty-two, and at this time was perfectly lame, besides being exacting and peevishly irritable. Then, in the face of ever increasing difficulties, Letitia attended to the

housekeeping herself, and took upon her own shoulders a larger share of the financial management, thus practically saving her family from the utter ruin threatened by Carlo's reckless extravagance. She was economical to stinginess, but it was needful, and the little money that was not spent by her husband on travelling was pounced upon by Uncle Lucien, who locked it up in his own cash-box and hid the keys. Many who accused the careful housewife of meanness excused and praised her in after years, when she gave without stint on every occasion that menaced the future of her children, and showed herself ready to sacrifice her hardly-amassed savings for their liberty, their honour, or their happiness.

We have seen that the bringing up of the children was entirely in her hands, and that she fulfilled her maternal duties with kindness, but firmness. They grew up perfectly robust, but she had no time to enjoy their health or their beauty, or hardly a moment to rejoice over their developing intelligence, as she toiled to feed and clothe them, and to keep her home in order. She had their affairs under her perfect control, but she never interfered in the business matters of her husband, whose duty it was to make money, but who consequently might dispose of it as he pleased. Long before her time, it had been prescribed by the customs and traditions

of Corsica that a wife is the subject of her husband, and any criticism of his mode of action had been forbidden from time immemorial. She never speculated why this should be, nor questioned the justice of it; she bowed beneath the yoke, but was unconscious of its weight.

One child after another was born, adding more and more to her daily work, till it became impossible for her to leave the house, except to attend church on Sundays. She herself said:

"My presence at home was indispensable to keep my children in check during their early years. I am aware that true Christianity requires us to go to church every day, and certainly never to neglect a festival. At the same time, I do not believe that the Church insists that people who are guiding important affairs, or mothers of families, should spend a large portion of their time away from home in the course of the week, and thus interrupt the regular sequence of their work. They would be guilty of far greater sin in the sight of God, considering the wrong-doing that might take place during the absence of the head of the family."

She looked upon it as the most natural thing in the world to bear children and to fulfil the duties of her home, which were never interrupted by her condition, and an approaching confinement caused her no extra anxiety. Her little ones came into the world and she nursed them herself,

if she had time; but if she considered this impossible, she sent for the wife of some fisherman or herdsman to undertake the duty for her, though it did not in the least hinder her from watching just as carefully over her baby as she did over the other children.

The greatest tenderness and the warmest solicitude were always in reserve for the child who most needed them, whose troubles she looked upon in the light of sickness and considered it her duty as a mother to comfort the sufferer, whatever might have been the cause of his misfortune.

CHAPTER VI.

Joseph and Napoleon leave for France—Napoleon in Brienne —Increasing pecuniary difficulties—Illness and death of Carlo Bonaparte.

In December, 1778, the Bonaparte family, in addition to its elder members, consisted of Joseph, Napoleon, Lucien (born 1775), Maria-Anna (born 1777), and Louis (born 1778).

Their financial difficulties had become even still more serious, and the Governor gave them a new proof of his favour by inducing his nephew, the Archbishop of Autun, to admit Joseph as a free scholar into the High School of the town, as well as to procure the entrance of Napoleon into the Military School at Brienne, likewise without payment. He sent Joseph Fesch to the Seminary at Aix in the same manner, and never ceased to show substantial kindness to the family. Carlo was able to accompany his two sons to France, as he had again been nominated one of a Corsican deputation.

It was no real sorrow to the boys to leave their impoverished home for the unknown, where adventure, perhaps happiness was awaiting them; besides, they were together and with a father who was capable of the most generous impulses. They were accustomed to see him only at intervals, but his arrival always enlivened their monotonous existence and was the signal for parties and entertainments, unheard of at any other time. He left them at *Autun, but it was enough that they were still together and could comfort each other when an intense longing for home overcame them; so that it was not till after five months that life began in all seriousness for them both, and Joseph remained alone at Autun, while Napoleon, at nine years old, was sent on to Brienne, where he suffered terribly from the very beginning in his eager craving for home, for the beauty of the Corsican sky and the genial warmth of the climate. Here, in gloomy, rugged Champagne, he reflected with bitter pain that it would be six years at least before he could again set eyes on the beloved island, which was engraved on his very heart, and one day he exclaimed in despair: "To be far from the home of one's birth, from the garden in which one has played from infancy, to be away from one's father's house is to be without a Fatherland!" His schoolfellow, Bourienne,

* The Preparatory School for Brienne.

speaks of him in his *Mémoires* as a grave, silent, reserved child, who never joined his comrades, nor attempted to share in their games. The moment the recreation bell rang, he used to run down to the library and bury himself in some historical work, Plutarch by preference; and the gloomy child who could hardly express himself in French, who was small of stature and delicate in appearance, looked upon himself as a foreigner in France, and most certainly had not the smallest presentiment of his future greatness.

He continued to read his prayers in Italian, just as his mother had taught him, which gained him the approbation of some of his teachers, that of Abbé Dupuy in special, who allowed him access to his library; but his comrades called his piety hypocrisy, and teased and mocked him, while they made fun of his sickly appearance, his dreamy expression, his language, his Christian name, his birth-place, and the miserable stock of clothes he had brought from home. They cast doubts on his nobility and jeered at his father's poverty, both masters and scholars being unanimous in their antipathy towards this strange boy, who was living a hermit life in their midst—in short, little Napoleon was the black sheep of the school.

"I will do as much harm as I can to your Frenchmen," he used to say to Bourienne, who

tried to soothe him. "*You* do not make a fool of me, *you* are fond of me."

The child of nine was here beginning the battle of life; he had no facility in attaching himself to others, he was unamiable and unattractive, and without a compatriot with whom he could talk of his Fatherland, which absence and distance rendered doubly dear to him; he was thus condemned to solitude in the midst of his sneering companions and ignorant teachers, who subjected him to discipline which was revolting to his mind, and to a mode of life which was injurious to his body. As a punishment for some trifling offence, he was one day told by a teacher to kneel down and eat his dinner in that position. The boy refused, but he was forced on to his knees, when he became deadly pale, trembled all over, and closed his eyes in despair, while his inner gaze must have been directed towards his home on that distant rock-bound island, as he uttered his heartrending cry:

"Mother! Mother! You told me so! We do not kneel to men, only to God!"

There was no help for him but to work and wait, with such comfort as he could get from his strong sense of duty and his ambition; he continued reserved and engrossed with his own dreams and recollections even at the end of a year.

After the birth of her second daughter, the

celebrated beauty, Maria-Paoletta (born March 25th, 1780), Letitia was seized with a longing to see her sons in France, and she and her husband arranged to accompany Lucien to Autun, and then go on to Brienne to visit Napoleon, whom she feared to find looking ill, perfectly well aware, too, that she would see him altered. But the reality far exceeded her apprehensions; she could scarcely believe her own eyes when she first saw him, and it was some minutes before she recognised him, when she was so dismayed at his thinness that she maintained he was a changeling, not her son.

Napoleon, who alluded to the circumstance when in St. Helena, adds: "I was really very much altered, for I had been spending all my recreation time in work, and my nights were frequently taken up in pondering over my studies. From the very beginning, I could not bear to think that my place in class could be anything but the first. My mother at that time was twenty-nine, and "belle comme les amours."

It is true that Madame Bonaparte created quite a sensation by her beauty during this first visit to France, and wherever she appeared she was called "the lovely Corsican;" but on once hearing the remark, she modestly observed:

"Those of my countrywomen who deserve to be thought beautiful are still in Corsica."

As a fact there was only one woman on

the island that could be compared with her, a Signorina Baciocchi, the sister of her future son-in-law.

Her youngest daughter, Maria Annunziata, who became Queen of Naples, was born in 1782, and in the course of this year, Marbœuf was instrumental in obtaining a nomination for Maria-Anna in the celebrated institution of Madame de Maintenon at St. Cyr. At any other time, the parents would have welcomed the good news with joy, but they were in such terrible need of money that they could not furnish the means to send the girl to France. The harvest had failed, and Bonaparte had already borrowed so much on their country-house Milelli, as well as on their other property, that it was impossible to raise another penny on them.

Letitia was capable and courageous in meeting their daily difficulties and in exerting herself to reduce the household expenses still further. But these hours of anxiety about daily bread were crushing her very soul, as the poverty which she had dreaded was already at the door, and then she discovered, probably for the first time, that the husband on whom she believed she could lean, was as weak as a broken reed. With want staring them in the face, he seemed to become even more helpless and selfish, he persistently neglected his business, and indulged his craving for wine, without thought or scruple.

The malady which was to bring him to an early grave, two years later, first became serious in Ajaccio in 1783, though thanks to the tender care of his wife, it was kept in check for a short time, when weakness and want of money detained him more closely at home.

It was a bitter, anxious time for husband and wife, as Letitia looked back upon her married life which had been one long round of work, worry, and economy, and it was now the aim of them both to hide the penury which was causing many a smarting pang to Bonaparte's proud nature.

About this time Napoleon passed his examination before ending his term of five or six years at Brienne, to enter the Military School in Paris, in 1784. The restless longing for change again drove his father to cross the sea, and Rosel de Beaumanoir, whom we have already mentioned, lent him twenty-five gold pieces to enable him to consult a French specialist. Four years later, when their friend was leaving for his paternal home in Normandy, Letitia prepared to sell her plate in order to pay her husband's debts, but Beaumanoir generously begged her to wait until a more convenient opportunity. The service was not forgotten, and in his day of power and glory Napoleon amply repaid this kindness to his father. Bonaparte was too ailing to travel alone, he was therefore accompanied by his son Joseph and his young brother-in-law, Abbé Fesch. He had lived

a wandering life and he was destined to die in a foreign land. The crossing aggravated his condition and forced him to stop short at Montpellier, where the internal trouble from which he had so long been suffering became more and more acute, and the doctor, whom he was obliged to consult, discovered that he had cancer in the stomach, without any hope of permanent alleviation. His wife was *enceinte* with her youngest son at the time, and the invalid forbade both his son and his brother-in-law to allow any disquieting news to be sent to her. He had taken rooms in a poor, cheap little inn in Montpellier, but Letitia's friend, Madame de Permon, was fortunately living in the town, where her husband held an important post, and they both opened their house to the sick man, who improved under these better conditions, and even regained, to a certain extent, his power to entertain, as he told of his life in Rome and Pisa when a young man, and depicted scenes in the Corsican War of Independence, when he never failed to express his admiration for Paoli. Then he would tell of his wife's domestic virtues, her motherly devotion to her large family, and her heroic conduct during the struggle for freedom. After a time, he even felt so well that he wrote to tell her he was in hopes of being cured. But the improvement was of short duration, the malady spread rapidly, and resulted in violent sickness, with inability to take nourishment, when

the patient became fully aware that the time had come to realise the near approach of death. He continued to insist that his wife should not be told of his serious condition, and would not hear of her leaving their little children to come to him. He often spoke with tender solicitude about his family, for whom he had made no provision, and used to say of Napoleon : " I am quite certain that he will make his way, but I shall not see it."

Bonaparte had been a freethinker from his boyhood, but the thought of death was sufficient to make him repent bitterly, and he sent for the parish priest of St. Denis, from whom he received the last sacraments in all humility. His dying thoughts were for his wife and children, and he said to his son Joseph, who was kneeling in tears by his bedside :

" My son, follow my example and trust in God! But shun the errors of my youth, guide and protect your brothers, be a true friend to your sisters, and show to your sorrowing mother the devotion and respect to which she is entitled. . . . . I wish I could have seen my dear little Napoleon again! his caresses would have soothed my last sufferings ; but God has willed it otherwise!"

Then, as though with a presentiment that it would be this son who would be the future head of the family, he murmured again and again :

" Napoleon."

Even the very moment before he died, when his mind was wandering, he was heard to whisper:

"Where is Napoleon? Why does he not come and defend his father with his big sword?"

After three months' acute suffering in bed, he fell asleep in the arms of his eldest son, February 24th, 1785, at seven o'clock in the evening, while Abbé Fesch, Monsieur and Madame de Permon stood watching at the foot of the couch. He was probably between thirty-eight and thirty-nine at the time of his death. He was buried quietly at Montpellier, but with few mourners to follow him to the grave.

CHAPTER VII.

After the father's death—Letter from Napoleon to his mother—Her strength of character—Death of the Archdeacon Lucien.

IMMEDIATELY after the funeral, Joseph Bonaparte and Abbé Fesch returned to Corsica to communicate the tidings of her husband's death to Letitia, who a few months previously, November, 1784, had given birth to her youngest son, Jerome, whom she always deeply loved, coming, as he did, so shortly before the death of his father.

She was not blind to the fact that Bonaparte had been but a poor father, but she considered him more weak than culpable, and her sorrow for him was sincere. She was still young and full of energy, thoroughly resigned to every circumstance, which she accepted as sent from heaven; she neither murmured nor argued against the Divine will, Who, she firmly believed, "ordereth all things both in heaven and earth."

Her friends advised her to marry again, and

she was still young enough to be sought, in spite of thirteen confinements and eight living children, in spite too of her decidedly small means. But she had not been sufficiently happy in her first marriage to wish to enter on a second, and besides, she would not burden the shoulders of another with the anxious task of providing for the future of her children, which she resolved should prove her sole charge, and while comforting them, she forgot her own sorrow. She was naturally faithful in the performance of her duty, and from this moment she renounced every other worldly tie that might have hindered her. Napoleon said of her, in St. Helena: "Left without husband and without help, my mother was compelled to take the guidance of affairs into her own hands, and the burden was not beyond her strength; she looked after everything, and arranged each item with a prudence and foresight hardly to be looked for in her sex and at her age."

But the effort of combating all these innumerable difficulties alone, produced a tinge of hardness on her pure and lovely features, though it is possible they gained in strength what they lost in softness.

The death of the father naturally brought about a change in the family plans. Joseph had at first wished to become a priest, later on an engineer; but this could not be, and he had to remain at home to assist his mother by looking

after their property, and in superintending the workmen who, at the expense of the State, had commenced operations in the new Salt Works and Nursery Grounds. At the same time he managed to study in order to pass examinations which would entitle him to some official post on the island.

Napoleon wrote thus to Letitia after his father's death :

"Paris, March 29th, 1785.

My precious mother!

Now that the first shock of your sorrow has passed away, I hasten to show you the deep gratitude which I feel for all your great goodness to me. Take comfort, my darling mother! you have need of all your strength. We will re-double our tenderness towards you and make our way, though we know well that our devotion can in no way compensate for the loss of a beloved husband."

As a child he had hardly lived with his father, and during the last six years in Brienne he had seen him but once with his mother, so that he had no knowledge of him in reality; he had only an imaginary picture, which would account for the impossibility of feeling the attachment that comes from daily intercourse, or any deep feelings of grief when the unknown father was taken from him. But he was fully alive to the burden that

would now rest upon his shoulders in the care of this large family, hampered with debts. While his elder brother was assisting his mother in Corsica, this boy of sixteen lost no time in petitioning the Ministry for help towards the education of his brothers. He worked unweariedly and without a murmur, with "the most steady, dogged resolution," and the domineering tone which clung to him, even when it behoved him to be humble and submissive.

In the meantime, Letitia too was slaving to keep their heads above water, and made and washed everything for her children, till a persistent sore on her finger forced her to employ a seamstress, to whom she paid three francs a month. It would seem impossible to conceive or credit how little money there was, if portions of letters were not still extant which prove the fact. In one of them, Napoleon complains that his mother has not returned six francs which he had lent her, and in another he speaks of three francs which she owed him; though all this time she was making not only his linen, but all his clothes, with her own hands, and could not afford to send him the smallest parcel before receiving a remittance from him to cover the expense of carriage to France

As a widow she was in receipt of a small pension from the State, which was barely sufficient to bring up her children, even with the closest

economy, and for this she was indebted to her old friend Marbœuf, who died soon after rendering her this last service, September 20th, 1786, at the age of eighty. He had married two years previously, and the Emperor Napoleon was by no means unmindful of his survivors. He gave the title of Imperial Baroness to his widow, and a pension of 15,000 francs, "in grateful remembrance of the services which her husband had rendered to his family."

Letitia expressed the wish that Madame Marbœuf should be appointed her lady-in-waiting, but her son did not consider it suitable to offer the lady a subordinate position in a family who were under such deep obligations to her husband.

In January, 1787, young Lieutenant Bonaparte visited his home on furlough for the first time, and later on he remarked to General Duroc :—

"The perfect happiness of my return was marred by the loss of two who had been dear to me, my father and his old friend Marbœuf, the benefactor of our family."

Napoleon loved his home, different as it was from the recollection of his childhood, and in spite of the daily life being more like that of a monastery or a school, with absolutely regular hours for prayer, sleep, work, meals, exercise and, recreation. He enjoyed his stay at their country villa Milelli, where he read and studied, rejoicing that at the close of a tedious law-suit with the

Jesuits, the decision had been given in favour of Madame Bonaparte, and here, in the peace of the country, he wrote his history of the emancipation of Corsica, the plan of which he unfolded to his mother, and afterwards read aloud the sections as they were completed. He loved this picturesque island of his birth with his whole soul, as well as his poor, proud-spirited countrymen, and each deep valley that intersects its forest-clad hills.

Towards the close of his life he liked to recall the land of his birth, and from the rocky island on which he died, the prisoner of England, to look back to Corsica, of which he was so proud. He used to say, "The Romans never bought Corsican slaves, they knew that they could do nothing with them, that it was impossible to subject them to the yoke of tyranny." Then he would exclaim, "One's native land is always dear; I could even love St. Helena if it had been my birth-place."

He remained at home over a year, and then returned to his regiment, but he visited Corsica again in 1791, on the occasion of the serious illness of his Uncle Lucien, when nearly the whole family was assembled round the aged man. Joseph was occupying a Government appointment on the island, young Lucien, who had been at Autun, and later on at Brienne, was likewise at home, where Pauline, Annunziata, and little Jerome were living with their mother Maria-

Anna, who was still at St. Cyr, and Louis, a soldier, were in France, but Letitia's half-brother, Joseph Fesch, who was looked up to as the spiritual counsellor of the family, happened to be in Ajaccio at the time.

On his first visit after his father's death, Napoleon had found the Archdeacon perceptibly weaker in himself, and deeply cast down by the loss of his nephew Carlo. He had then alluded to his own death, and tried to comfort the young ones by reminding them of the support they would always find in their mother's strong character. His own end was now close at hand, and as Joseph stood with the others by the bedside of his uncle, the old man said to him:

"You are the eldest, but," pointing to Napoleon, "he will be the head of the family, for he will become a great man!" Then he turned to Madame Bonaparte, and said:

"Letitia, do not weep. I die in peace; for I see you surrounded by your children." A few minutes later, October 16th, 1791, he drew his last breath.

CHAPTER VIII.

Paoli's return—Lieutenant Bonaparte and the National Guard in Corsica.

THE great Revolution had broken out in France, and the bloody scenes which were being enacted in Paris roused the combative spirit of the Corsicans, who claimed their share in the freedom for which the French nation had risen *en masse.*

It will be remembered that the old champion for the independence of Corsica, Pascal Paoli, had been living as an exile in England since 1769; he was now recalled and travelled back through France, where Lafayette presented him to the National Assembly and to the King, who made him lieutenant-general and gave him control over the whole military system of Corsica. A deputation welcomed him on his arrival at Ajaccio, and the whole Island received him with triumphant rejoicing. Napoleon was in the city at the time, spending his furlough with his mother as usual, and watching the formation of a National Guard

similar to the one that had recently been organised in France. He was encouraged to offer himself as commander of one of the battalions, a post which he could hold simultaneously with that of first lieutenant in the French artillery. It would further his promotion, considerably increase his income, and strengthen the connection with his native island. Four battalions were to be raised, the troops of which might select their own officers; but two sharply opposed parties had arisen—the democrats, to which Bonaparte and his friends belonged, and the aristocrats, who were supported by the priesthood. Both were eager for supremacy, and money was an essential item. This would have been an insuperable difficulty for Napoleon a few years earlier, but the little fortune that Archdeacon Lucien had scraped together was now the inheritance of the impoverished family, and what he had held with a tight hand during his life-time had placed the Bonapartes, if not in the foremost rank of the island's nobility, at least among the families whose maintenance was secure.

The richer candidates used every inducement to attract supporters, and Letitia opened her house on her son's behalf; a liberal table was spread at all hours, and mattresses placed on the floors to afford rest and shelter for the night.

The cause of the aristocrats was weakened by fresh adherents who daily strengthened her son's

prospects of success, but his position was by no means secure. Napoleon could not sleep at night, and spent his days in nervous, restless counsel with Abbe Fesch and his party. "It is probable," writes the Corsican historian, Gregorovius, "that he looked forward with far less anxiety to the Consulate and the Empire than he did to the rank of Major in the National Guard of Ajaccio."

His mother was the only person to whom he opened his heart in full confidence, in whom he confided all his plans and his motives for desiring this appointment, and to whose opposition he listened without complaint. He used to say, "My mother's judgment is sound, and she is never mistaken; her counsel and experience are invaluable to me."

The delay seemed endless; Letitia's expenses were out of all proportion to her means, and she was afraid that she could not hold out to the end. One day she said sorrowfully:—"I have hardly any money left, I must either sell my property or borrow." Her son made an impatient movement, as she added:—"It is not poverty, but shame that I fear."

"Mother," said Napoleon, as he embraced her, his voice quivering with emotion, "do not lose heart, and do continue to help me; we cannot turn back, we have gone too far. The battalions will be organised in ten days, my men will cease

to be a burden to you, they will be paid by the Government. If once I gain the promotion I am looking for, our fortune is made. A fire will soon be kindled in Europe, and a brilliant future is in store for the man who can seize his opportunity. Military tactics will carry the day, and I am confident of success. I can gauge the powers of all my contemporaries, and I assure you, mother, that there are not more than four capable of commanding a regiment. *I* shall be wanted, and I shall know how to make myself indispensable. Danger and fatigue do not alarm me, and unless I am carried off by an early death, I shall undoubtedly be rewarded with glory and good luck. Mother! do what you possibly can, but above all things, do not be cast down; your health might suffer, and I am in need of your devotion and endurance."

Then, overcome by the vehemence of his feelings, he left her.

In the meantime, the Commissioner, who was to superintend the elections on behalf of the Government, had arrived at Ajaccio, and taken up his quarters in the house of Marius Peraldi, Bonaparte's rival, which was a blow to the young officer and his party, who, however, resolved to try the effect of a ruse.

One of Napoleon's most ardent supporters, Bagaglino, a wild daring youth, forced his way late one evening, armed to the teeth, into the

house of Marius Peraldi, and surprised both host and guest at the supper-table.

"Signora Letitia wishes to speak to you," he shouted in a threatening tone to the Commissioner. "Follow me instantly!"

The guest rose from the table, and Peraldi did not dare to detain the officer, who was seized by a band of Napoleon's friends and carried off to the house of Madame Bonaparte, with the excuse that he would not be free to act under the roof of Marius Peraldi.

The election was a stormy one, but Bonaparte and his friends won the day, and he was appointed Commander of one of the National Guard battalions.

CHAPTER IX.

Fresh disturbances—Persecution by Paoli—The Bonaparte Family take refuge in France.

NAPOLEON was far more deeply interested in the affairs of Corsica than in those of France during this year 1791, and even in the midst of the great Revolution, when the country needed all her officers, he never hesitated on the slightest pretext to ask for leave of absence to visit his native island, and after his appointment as an officer in the National Guard, he prolonged his stay at home, without the least regard to the consequences. In February, 1792, he was struck off the roll of the French Army on the ground of this illegal absence, but he was too much engrossed with the affairs of Corsica to pay much heed to the fact. He was idolised by his soldiers, and while prudently keeping himself in the background, he did not scruple to foment disturbances against the authorities under the guise of promoting the cause of the Revolution, but not

without the tacit intention of usurping power for himself.

On Easter Day, 1792, a dispute arose between the townspeople and the soldiers of the National Guard, when the latter were threatened with the loss of their weapons, and a regular street fight ensued. Napoleon was in his mother's house at the time, and as he was hastening down to his men, Letitia met him at the foot of the stairs and entreated him not to leave her, as she cried :

"Oh! my son, do not expose yourself to almost certain death ; spare your mother the sorrow of losing you."

But he tore himself from her arms, saying, as he kissed her and his sisters :

" Duty calls me, and I am going."

The fighting spread to the citadel, where Bonaparte and his men attacked the French troops of the line, who were quartered there.

The news soon reached the ears of Paoli, who sent a detachment of trusted men to restore peace and order in his name.

Bonaparte appealed to the Governor and tried to justify the attack of the National Guard, when a commission was appointed to inquire into the matter, and the young captain decided to go to Corte to plead on behalf of himself and his men. He was coldly received by his parents' former friends, and Paoli, who had been quick to see through his motive in favouring the disorders

among his men, degraded him and disbanded his battalion. Without position and without money, Napoleon again returned to Paris to seek for service as an officer in the French Army, but for some time without success. He found himself almost in want, and harassed by innumerable plans that might help him to earn his bread. But on the occasion of the storming of the Tuileries and the imprisonment of the royal family, fortune began to smile on him again. The Radical party attached him to their cause and made him Captain of Artillery. But it was still Corsica that occupied his thoughts, while he watched his opportunity to return to the island. The new Government had dissolved all the royal schools, and St. Cyr too was to be closed, when his sister would be practically homeless. Utterly bewildered, he begged for permission to take her to his mother, which was granted him, and he remained in Corsica till June, 1793, without being called to account. Paoli had been appointed Governor of Corsica with unlimited power, but he could not fall in with the principles of French revolutionary politics. He grieved over the deposition and imprisonment of Louis XVI., and absolutely refused to occupy his post as a French General of the forces in the south of the country.*

*"As the Revolution advanced, Paoli, like most other wise men, became satisfied that licence was more likely to be established by its leaders than law and rational liberty, and on

For the second time, he contemplated the surrender of Corsica to the English, and was at no pains to conceal his intentions.

The Bonapartes were quietly determined to remain true to France. Joseph wished to win over Paoli, but Napoleon was firmly resolved to break with him, though he felt it would be imprudent to make known his views just at this juncture. Lucien, on the other hand, had no such scruples. He thoroughly hated Paoli, partly on account of his opposition to his brother, and partly because he had refused to take him into his service as secretary. It was he, therefore, who took the lead and influenced the others. In spite of his youth, the position he held in the clubs of Ajaccio was as important as that of far older and more experienced men in France. Endowed with an extraordinary fluency of language, he led his hearers to believe that his views were sound, and even elevated, and that his brain was teeming with new and important ideas. When Paoli discharged Napoleon from the National Guard, the young man had gone immediately to the Republican Club and denounced the action of the General in a disparaging speech, and on several occasions

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avowing his aversion to the growing principles of Jacobinism, and the scenes of tumult and bloodshed to which they gave rise, he was denounced in the National Assembly as the enemy of France."

at a later date he had proved himself his enemy.

An embassy was sent to the island from Paris in 1792, and with the exception of the brothers Bonaparte and their uncle, Abbé Fesch, there were very few of the residents of Ajaccio who could express themselves in French, and probably the only lady who could speak the language fluently was the youthful Maria Anna Bonaparte.

The Ambassadors Trugut and Sémonville were therefore very pleased to be admitted into their family circle, and the attentions of the former to Maria Anna became so pronounced that the mother quite thought they would end in a demand for her daughter's hand. Lucien became secretary and interpreter to Sémonville, and accompanied him on his return to France.

Immediately on his arrival, he hastened to the political clubs, where he thundered against the proceedings of General Paoli in Corsica, and drew up a defamatory address, which was accepted and forwarded to the National Convention in Paris.

Dumouriez's unpatriotic plans had recently been discovered, and he was in banishment on the ground that he had intended to betray France to the Austrians ; and this intelligence that Paoli was ready to yield up his island to the English fell like a bomb among the members, who exclaimed : "So treason has broken out in two

places at once!" and it was resolved that the veteran Champion of Freedom should be arrested.

The news reached the General like wild-fire, and hurt him the more acutely as he contrasted the action of Lucien with the devotion of Carlo Bonaparte, which he had never forgotten. He continued to entertain the highest esteem and friendship for Letitia, whom he had seen by her husband's side during the War of Independence, and he could not conceal his sorrow that her sons should have joined the ranks of his opponents. As soon as the Corsicans heard that the liberty of their national hero was in danger, every trace of party strife disappeared, and the majority of the islanders rallied round their old leader.

January 26th, 1793 (five days after the execution of Louis XVI.) it was solemnly declared that Corsica had broken with France, and that Paoli had unanimously been elected commander-in-chief and ruler of the island by the deputies who had hastened to the meeting from every commune in the island.

"Long live Paoli! Paoli alone shall reign over us! We agree to all that he asks. Vengeance and ruin to all his enemies!" were the shouts of dense crowds of men, which were re-echoed in every valley of the island and caught up again and again around the walls of Ajaccio.

Paoli sent the following message to Letitia :—

"Cease to offer me resistance! It can only

bring destruction to yourself, your family, and your people. The misfortune to which you expose yourself is incalculable, and nobody will compensate you for your loss."

But threats were powerless to deter her from sharing the lot of her sons.

Another of her husband's faithful old friends, Ambrogini, sent the following note :—

"Signora! If you write to the General that you disapprove of your sons' proceedings, he will see that everything that is yours shall be untouched," to which she replied :—

"Tell Paoli that I thought he knew me better. He must be aware that my sons are acting by my advice, which I will enforce if necessary. I have constituted myself a French subject, and such I will remain."

This energetic reply closed the door to any further attempt at reconciliation, and the Bonapartes were declared outlaws in a popular assembly, when Paoli ordered the confiscation of their property, and it is even said that in the fury of his wrath he insisted that the brothers should be brought before him, dead or alive.

Letitia begged her sons to leave her, and they obeyed, after disguising themselves, that their presence might not expose her and the little ones to the revenge and hatred of the Paolists.

In spite of her spirit, Letitia was in terrible anxiety, knowing well that the police of Ajaccio

were on the track of her sons; but she heard through a secret messenger, which they contrived to send in order to assure her of their safety, that Joseph had reached Bastia and that Napoleon was at Calvi. She herself hoped to protect her property by remaining in the city with her younger children, where faithful friends came day by day to guard the entrance to the house.

As time went on, the reports became more alarming, and flight was now imperative. Letitia sent messengers by land and by sea to Napoleon and Joseph, and tried to hinder Paoli's men by spreading the news that French men-of-war were on their way to the island. But they did not come, and the fury of the people against the Bonapartes and their supporters grew more and more ungovernable.

One night, as she was lying all dressed on her bed to seek an hour's rest, she was roused to find her room full of armed mountaineers, and for a moment she thought she was in the hands of the enemy, until, by the light of the pine torches which they held in their hands, she could distinguish the features of their leader, Costa Bastelica, a most devoted friend of her sons, who said to her:

"Be quick, Signora Letitia, the Paolists are on our heels; there is not a moment to lose, all my men are here with me, and we will rescue you or die in your defence."

The mother and children rose in all haste, and were barely allowed the time to put on the most necessary clothing. The two youngest, Annunziata and Jerome, were entrusted to the care of their great-aunt, Signora Pietra-Santa, who promised to conceal them for a while; then with her two daughters, Maria Anna and Paoletta, her son Louis and her brother, Joseph Fesch, Letitia left the sleeping city in the dead of night.

They went first to their villa Milelli, but took to the mountains when they found they were being pursued. The mother led Paoletta by the hand, and her brother followed with Louis and Maria Anna, while their faithful friends, armed with daggers, guns and pistols, preceded them and brought up the rear. They had to climb rocks and wade through brooks, not daring to seek rest in the woods before daybreak, when they were at a safe distance from the city and its immediate neighbourhood; but fresh peril often forced them to separate and hide behind trees and bushes, on the approach of armed troops belonging to Paoli on their way to Ajaccio.

The fugitives could see them as they marched, sometimes so close to them that they could hear them speak, and gather what they meant to do when they reached the city. Among other things, they had settled to plunder Madame Bonaparte's house, and then set it on fire. In spite of the terror of the poor children, they did not utter

a sound, a sign from their mother being sufficient to keep them perfectly still, and even the wretched animal on which they rode in turns seemed instinctively to feel that danger was at hand, and did not stir. They continued their painful journey till Maria Anna became quite ill with exposure and over-exertion, her thin shoes and frock were torn to shreds by the brambles, her feet were bleeding, and she began to cry, "Don't cry, my child," her mother said to her gently; "do as I do, suffer and be still."

The little girl and the two other children, who were also nearly sinking with fatigue, were placed on the horse, while Letitia continued to walk, supported first by one, then by another of her friends. Even at this distance, they could see the glare of burning in Ajaccio, and one of the men exclaimed:

"Look, Signora, your house is in flames."

Both the girls burst into tears, while Letitia stood for a moment in silent despair. The ties that knit her to her native island were of too strong a nature to be severed without a pang, and after twenty-four years spent in a peaceful home, she saw herself an outcast on the wide world, as the roof which she had kept over their heads all these years with so much toil, economy, and care crumbled into ruin before her eyes.

Lucien Bonaparte in his *Mêmoires* says that his mother exclaimed on this occasion:

"What does it matter if our house is burnt down? We will build it up again far handsomer than it was before. Long live France!"

Such an outburst at such a time was very unlike Madame Bonaparte, and trained as she had been in admiration for Paoli, she could not have deserted him with a light heart. Besides, her deep attachment to Corsica would never have allowed her to see the old home of her family vanish into smoke without emotion; and we are sure that she could not for one moment have thought without a shudder of the future which was now dawning on herself and her eight children.

Napoleon had gone on board a fast sailer at Calvi, and hoped to be able to pick up his mother somewhere to escort her to France. He cruised along the coast and cast anchor near the place to which he thought their friends would guide her, then he landed and sought out some shepherds from whom he expected to hear news from Ajaccio, and they told him that his mother's house had been plundered, wrecked, and burnt directly after her hasty flight.

He seemed petrified with despair, as he exclaimed:—

"My poor mother! Where is she? Where shall I be able to find her?"

He did not dare to run the risk of certain danger by scouring the neighbourhood himself, but he sent out the shepherds in every direction,

while he sat on a lonely rock, a prey to burning anxiety for the return of his messengers. Night fell and morning dawned, but no one came, till suddenly one of the shepherds rushed up to him, shouting :—

"Quick, fly."

An armed band from Ajaccio sent to capture his family was nearing the rock on which he was sitting. He sprang up, cast himself into the sea, and swam for his life.

After wandering for two nights, Letitia and her companions had at last caught sight of the French Flag, and that same day, when he had escaped by swimming, Napoleon, looking through his glass, saw a group on the strand signalling to the ship. It was his mother and the children, who were at once fetched off in a boat.

Some friends brought Jerome and Annunziata from Ajaccio, when the whole family embarked for France.

CHAPTER X.

Early days in France—Joseph Bonaparte and Julie Clary—Napoleon made General—Letitia and her daughters.

When Letitia recalled her flight from Ajaccio in after years, she used to say :

"No real misfortune could touch me, for my little ones were with me, and Providence would never have forsaken a mother who was the sole protector of a young boy and three little girls, whose beauty added to the dangers that surrounded them."

It was at the end of May, 1793, that she had embarked at Calvi with her children and reached the harbour of Toulon after safely eluding the English cruisers. The little ones thought that their troubles were over as soon as the French ship set sail, and their mother too was full of hope that the country would reward her sons for the sacrifices they had made to secure their native island to France. But she met with bitter disappointment where nobody thought of her and

her needs, in the face of hard times and a general upheaval of all social ties.

In order to live with as little expenditure as possible, Letitia first went to La Valette, a little country town in the neighbourhood of Toulon, where she and her family were exposed to absolute want, with nothing but one straw sack to lie upon, and a broken pot in which they cooked the vegetables which constituted their sole food. Later on they went to Bandol, where a respectable peasant gave them shelter for a few weeks, until they removed to Marseilles, where Madame Bonaparte was almost in despair. She had rescued nothing, neither money nor plate, not even her papers, in addition to which she and her children had not a garment beyond what they stood up in, and the small sums they borrowed were insufficient even to still their hunger. Only three of the children were old enough to earn their living, and the care of the others fell solely on the mother. As a Corsican fugitive, she was allowed to live rent-free in the empty house of a nobleman who had been guillotined, where she occupied a few rooms on the fourth floor; but later on she removed to some underground lodgings in a house in the Rue Lafon, which had been vacant since the Reign of Terror. Her thoughts constantly reverted to her native island during these troublous times, as she recalled the esteem in which she had been held there, while

here in France men looked down upon her because she was poor. But she was the descendant of a courageous, enduring, and contented race, and she realised better than most that no heart-sore can be healed by simply looking at it, but by accepting it and working the harder. In the face, therefore, of her longing for Corsica, and her penury in a land where she never felt thoroughly at home, she toiled day and night to supply the needs of herself and her children. But both strength and courage must have failed, if Napoleon had not helped her from his own small pay as Captain of Artillery, and if the Commandant in Marseilles had not ordered soldiers' rations to be served out to her, consisting of bread, meat, vegetables, fuel, and salt.

A little later on, her son Lucien took a situation as clerk in the military stores at St. Maximin, a small town in the neighbourhood of Marseilles. Joseph secured a post in the War Office, Napoleon was promoted to the rank of Major, and Abbé Fesch, who had accompanied his sister, also obtained some appointment outside the Church.

Comparative ease seemed therefore to be in store for them, when the two elegant young demagogues, Barras and Fréron, arrived in the town, and, as acquaintances of Napoleon, were introduced to his mother and sisters. The girls greatly admired them, while Madame Bonaparte

cast many a suspicious, anxious glance on the young men, though it was policy to reconcile herself to their frequent visits, as it was through their influence that she obtained her pension as a martyr to the cause of France in Corsica.

This was wealth in comparison with their former destitution, and enabled her to purchase linen and other clothing which her children so sorely needed.

In addition to seeing the girls at home, Barras and Fréron frequently met them in the street, when they went to the market in their very modest attire, to make the household purchases for their mother. Maria Anna, who later on re-christened herself Elisa, was eighteen, Paoletta, who adopted the French equivalent Paulette or Pauline, fifteen, and Annunziata, better known as Caroline, thirteen.

A warm friendship sprang up between the popular leaders and the young Corsican girls, which ripened into a deeper attachment on the part of Fréron towards Pauline, which was hardly to be wondered at, considering her extraordinary beauty.

Letitia, who knew nothing of the love-making out-of-doors, but who was not blind to the increasing warmth of the intercourse at home, became alarmed at the attentions of Fréron, as neither she nor her elder sons wished to see him a member of their family, and she seriously

thought of removing to Toulon, where Napoleon was conducting the memorable siege. But before she could carry out her intention, the fortress had been taken, and her son promoted to the rank of General at the early age of barely twenty-five.

It was about this time that Letitia and her daughters first made the acquaintance of a rich tradesman's family in Marseilles named Clary, consisting of three sons and three daughters, whose father had made his fortune as a soap boiler. One of the sons, Etienne, was anxious to ennoble this wealth by means of aristocratic alliances, which brought about his own imprisonment and reduced his sisters to despair. Joseph Bonaparte was introduced to them as a man of influence, and they entreated him to obtain the release of their brother, which he did.

Joseph was himself a nobleman, and as eldest son considered that he was justified in calling himself Comte de Bonaparte. He was about twenty-six, tall, handsome, and well built, with regular and commanding features. He was a far weaker* character than Napoleon, but he expressed himself in well-chosen, eloquent language, and was certainly formed to captivate a woman's heart.

Soon after the acquaintance had begun, he

* "His character may be summed up in one sentence: he was a weak, voluptuous, easy-tempered man, without elevation of mind, dignity of manners, or generosity of sentiment."

turned his attention to Julie, the plainest of the three sisters, who, although but twenty-three, was faded in appearance and singularly unprepossessing. She was of stunted growth, with a very bad figure, and her features gave the impression of great delicacy; her eyes were large and staring, her nose thick and her mouth ugly. But she had many virtues, which she seemed to try and conceal; she was pious, straightforward, extremely benevolent, faithful to duty, sincere and loving towards her own family, and as soon as she and Joseph were married, she showed herself equally anxious to gain the affection of her husband's relations, and to enter into the interests of her mother-in-law, but on the one condition that there should be no friction between the Clarys and the Bonapartes, for in that case she would unhesitatingly adopt the cause of her own people. She was witty and sparkling in repartee when with sympathetic friends, but exceedingly reserved in the presence of strangers. Last, but by no means least, she was in possession of a considerable fortune, left to her by her father, and perfectly secure even during the stormy period of the Revolution, in addition to which she had every prospect of inheriting still more from one of her brothers, who had amassed enormous wealth as a usurer.

In spite of her physical defects, Julie was an ideal daughter-in-law to Letitia, who appreciated

her moral advantages, and the two women became permanently and genuinely attached.

The austere Corsican mother, who extended her friendship to the whole Clary family, was anxious that her next son should marry Julie's sister Désirée, who afterwards became Queen of Norway and Sweden, and who was just as beautiful as her sister was plain. Napoleon sought her hand, and although by no means an attractive young man at this period of his life, Désirée did not seem averse from his suit; but it is said (in the *Mémoires* of Barras and some other contemporary writings) that her brothers maintained that "one Corsican in the family was sufficient." *

We have already observed that it was always the Corsican custom to look upon sons as of supreme importance in the house, and the mothers of the island still allowed their daughters to grow up as they themselves had done, without thought or conception of the requirements of real training. But in spite of this want, the Corsican women were irreproachable in their conduct, and, as a rule, of exemplary fidelity as wives. It is possible that Letitia's daughters would have developed into capable and virtuous women if they had remained in their early home; and although it

"* According to C. Bearne, "they were engaged for many months—she, between 14 and 15, loved him—he, in very low water, looked upon her wealth."

cannot be denied that they had inherited many of their father's easy, reckless propensities, they would probably have filled their place with honour under the old conditions. But transplanted as they were, just at a critical time, to live among the flighty, restless spirits of France, and raised by their brother's influence to a giddy height in an age when the impressions of childhood are most easily effaced, it resulted to their own misfortune, that they in no respect resembled their strong-minded mother.

Letitia's own bringing up had left much to be desired, but the discipline of the school of life had borne good fruit in her which was by no means apparent in her daughters, who never lost their impulsiveness, or gained in strength of character.

There were but few families in Corsica where the mother was qualified to further the education of her girls, and Letitia was certainly not one of these.

She wrote atrociously, and had no interest in books or learning. But what else could be expected of a native of this island, who was married when she was thirteen?

The daughters nevertheless owed their mother deep respect for her virtues and forcible character, her strict family discipline, her sound, clear judgment, and her courteousness.

In the early days of her residence in France, she was far too poor to give them any education

from home, and the results of the years that her eldest daughter had spent at St. Cyr had been far too meagre for her to wish to send her other girls away, even when her improved means would have allowed of the expense. And even if she had wished it, it would have been extremely difficult for her to procure instructors for them. Before the Revolution, most of the schools had been in the hands of the nuns, but in 1793 the cloisters were either closed or sold as the property of the nation, and the inmates dispersed in every direction.*

Napoleon was an excellent son, and thanks to him the home was put on a comfortable footing, while his own rapid advancement cast a glamour over Letitia and her daughters.

It is easy to conceive the effect of this sudden change of circumstances on these excitable girls, who, while their mother was immersed in the cares of her house, were allowed to do much as they pleased, and after having suffered the cruel pinch of poverty, with down-trodden shoes, ragged frocks, and battered hats, not to speak of many a day without sufficient bread, were suddenly dazzled by a promise of joy and plenty in the future. They were in exuberant spirits from morning till night, when they dreamt of splendour

* "The Communes of Paris have passed a decree which places the fortunes of every one at the mercy of the nation."—*London Chronicle*, *May*, 1793.

and riches, with gallant officers soliciting their hands in marriage.

Somewhat unwillingly, Letitia yielded to their entreaties, and opened her salon to a larger circle of acquaintances, when Elisa, the only plain one of the family, with literary tastes, read aloud to the guests. But far more amusement was undoubtedly provided by the little comedies which they acted between a couple of screens, by the glimmer of a tallow candle, when light-hearted, frolicsome Pauline played the part of a soubrette.

These inexpensive diversions were also a source of pleasure to their mother, who rarely spent an evening from home, but, like her son Napoleon, was devoted to theatricals.

CHAPTER XI.

Residence in Antibes—Lucien and Christine—Napoleon's marriage with Josephine—His visit to Letitia on his way to Italy—Letter to Josephine from her mother-in-law.

General Bonaparte was appointed to survey and arrange the whole line of fortifications on the Mediterranean coast of France, and as he wished to see something of his mother and sisters, he made a charming home for them in the little sea-side town of Antibes, not far from his own headquarters. The ladies were delighted, and looked forward to a happy time. People called upon them, and the young girls went constantly to Nice, where they danced with the officers, and enjoyed themselves, but their mother never discarded her old habits, and remained first and foremost the vigilant housewife. In after years the old inhabitants of Antibes used to tell of how they had seen the great Emperor's mother rinsing linen in a stream that flowed not far from her home. They returned to Marseilles after being

the guests of Napoleon for five months, to encounter fresh causes for anxiety.

General Bonaparte had been connected with Robespierre, and on the downfall of the tyrant, to the intense dismay of his family, he was put under arrest for ten or twelve days in the neighbourhood of Antibes, and only released from confinement on his swearing unalterable fidelity to France, while in consideration of his admirable skill and thoroughness, he was allowed to retain his rank of General. Letitia's third son, Lucien, had come forward in St. Maximin as a zealous Republican and popular orator, and among his most attentive listeners was an innkeeper named Boyer, with whom he spent a good deal of his time, and to whose daughter Christine he became attached. If we may believe his own *Mémoires*, he was morally forced by the father to make her his wife after an eloquent speech before a large audience, when his future father-in-law shouted to him :

"You have talked of equality in very pretty language, but if we are all of the same rank, why do you not marry my daughter? You pay court to her, and it is not fair; if you are an honest man, marry her at once!"

Lucien resembled his father in appearance, although he was not so good-looking; he was tall, but badly built, both arms and legs being too long. He screwed up his eyes, in consequence of extreme short-sightedness, his head was too small,

and he rarely held it erect, but his smile was bewitching, and in spite of his unprepossessing exterior, all women were attracted to him.

Neither Letitia nor his brothers approved of his marrying Boyer's daughter, though the girl was angelic in disposition and exceedingly beautiful ; but she was poor and uneducated.

Whenever Lucien was opposed in any plan that touched on his own personal affairs, he might be said to stand on his hind legs like a restive horse, when it was impossible to turn him from his purpose, and the more his mother and family disapproved of the marriage, the deeper became his attachment to the girl whom he had probably chosen in a fit of caprice. Letitia grew reconciled to the union, and as Christine bore him children, Lucien loved her more and more ardently, almost worshipped her ; while she on her part was deeply attached to her husband and modest in her bearing towards her relations.

Another marriage in the family was a source of far deeper disappointment to Letitia, and one that influenced her life more perceptibly, when they heard with dismay that on the 19th Ventose (March 9th), 1796, Napoleon had married Marie Josephine Rose Tascher de la Pagerie, widow of the Vicomte de Beauharnais. It is probable that the young soldier did not ask his mother's consent, simply because he foresaw what a storm this unexpected proceeding would evoke.

Through his brother's influence, Lucien had obtained a post in the Commissariat, and was hurried off by the General, who did not breathe a word of his martrimonial plans to Joseph nor to Louis, now an officer, whom he contrived to send out of Paris at the time.

In spite of his infatuation, he was perfectly clear that this extravagant, elegant woman of the world, this Viscountess who frequented the most frivolous society in the capital, who was several years older than himself, but all the same wholly engrossed with fine clothes, pleasure, and excitement, who had two grown-up children, and a troop of friends, of whom many were her reputed lovers, would have been totally out of her element in his mother's house. She was entirely different from Joseph's rich and ugly Mademoiselle Clary, whose tastes were so throroughly in accordance with those of his mother, and he was conscious too that his wife would suit her even less than the innkeeeper's ignorant, portionless daughter, who was elated by the extraordinary honour of being admitted into Madame Bonaparte's house; and even when basking in happiness at the feet of Josephine, a vision of the troubled looks of his mother must frequently have flitted before his eyes.

It was not without much hesitation that the Vicomtesse de Beauharnais consented to the marriage; and she felt so acutely that she had derogated from her dignity in giving him her

hand, that it was not till some time after the wedding that she could force herself to exchange the name of her first husband for that of Bonaparte.

The great Emperor, who a few years later was to find a home in the Tuileries, Schönbrunn, and the Kremlin, was occupying a very modest flat in Paris in 1796, when he was only a grave, sickly-looking officer with small means; and the conqueror, who was to keep kings awaiting his pleasure in the ante-room, was at this period a suppliant himself in the hall of Barras. He, who in the future parcelled out kingdoms for his brothers, had recently been in want of bread; and the crowds he saw in his daily walks had no conception that their future ruler was in their midst. His face was yellow and gaunt, his naturally well-formed hands were bony, his nails black, his hair was unkempt; and even Josephine could not forsee the physical change that was to come over him and create the bearing of a man born to an Imperial crown, as well as to a laurel wreath. She did not love him; he inspired her with fear rather than with sympathy, and when she at last consented to become his wife, it was because advancing years had begun to set their mark on her features, because her means were poor and precarious, without any prospect of improvement, and above all, because she began to loathe her position as Barras' mistress; she

knew that she was not his only one, and was well aware that he really loved nobody but himself.

She judged all family intercourse by what she had seen between her first husband and his relations, who took no notice of each other, and she herself was cheerfully content to be years without news of her own mother. She had an indistinct feeling that she had seen some of Napoleon's connections somewhere, but she never for one moment dreamt that he had a mother who might object to her, nor did she suspect that two distinct parties were being formed around her, the Bonapartes and the Beauharnais, between whom a long and bitter feud would exist. No presentiment warned her of the hatred and persecution which she would arouse, and it was long before she learnt to realise the wasps' nest on which she had placed her foot.

Napoleon's marriage had procured him the command of the army of Italy, and he left Paris a few days after the wedding. As a dutiful son he was extremely anxious to overcome his mother's objections to his union with Josephine, and paid her a short visit at Marseilles, on his way to headquarters at Nice. Lucien and Louis had already met his wife in society, and had looked upon her as an elderly woman of indifferent character with grown-up children. Their amazement was therefore boundless when they heard that their brother had chosen to make her his

wife, after they had repeated to their mother all the discreditable reports they knew about her.

In Corsica it was considered almost a shame to be childless, and Letitia was proud of her numerous family, which had contributed not a little to increase her influence on the island. Her new daughter-in-law was hardly likely to give her grandchildren; besides, if report spoke true, she had no fortune to meet the extravagant expenses and frivolous life of a Parisian. It was impossible for Josephine and her mother-in-law to have the least thing in common, and with her utter ignorance of French ways and the subtleties of the language, Letitia felt afraid of this consummate woman of the world.

But the joy of seeing her son as Commander-in-chief put on one side for the first few moments her great disappointment concerning his marriage.

Napoleon himself records their conversation :—

"My mother welcomed me with quite extraordinary delight, as she embraced me and exclaimed :—'So you are now a great General.'

"'I am the commanding General, which is not always the same as a great General,' I replied smiling. 'In height I am but a little General, but perhaps the day will come when I shall be morally great.'

"'You will make yourself known in the world,' rejoined my excellent mother. 'It was no empty remark of the Archdeacon on his death-bed that

you would become the head of the family. Who knows, perhaps it was vouchsafed to that incomparable man to see you in the position you occupy to-day!'

"'And I wonder how much higher I shall rise?" I replied with enthusiasm.

"'Commit no imprudence! Do not be more venturesome than your own self-respect will allow. How anxiously I shall look for the result of all your efforts! But God and the Holy Virgin will watch over you.'"

Napoleon remained some days with his mother, and when he embraced her on leaving, he said:

"Mother, be careful of your health, and live long, for after your death, all who belong to me in the world will become my vassals."

In spite of the satisfaction of this meeting, it had been difficult for him to reconcile his mother in any degree to his marriage. Josephine had written to her, but it was not until after her son had been gone nine days that Letitia could make up her mind to sign the following reply:

"To the Citoyenne La Pagerie-Bonaparte,
Rue Chantereine 6, Paris.
Marseilles.
12th Germinal (Year IV.), April 1st, 1796.

Madame!

"I have received your letter, which has strengthened me in the opinion I had formed of

you. My son had already told me of his happy marriage, and obtained my consent and approval, so that nothing remains to complete my satisfaction, but to make your acquaintance. Rest assured that I entertain a mother's feelings towards you, and that I love you equally with my own children. My son encourages me in the hope named in your letter, that you will meet him in Marseilles, and I look forward, Madame, to the pleasure which your visit will cause to myself. My daughters join me in hoping that we may see you shortly, and you must believe that my children are prepared to welcome you with the same devotion and tenderness they feel for their brother.

Accept, Madame, the assurance of my sincere attachment.

THE MOTHER, LETITIA BONAPARTE."

Napoleon had gained his wish, outward appearances were favourable, and Letitia's consent, in spite of its tardiness. was absolutely correct. Each single word in the letter was the result of thought, and had been well weighed in the family circle, including even Joseph, to whom it had been sent at Genoa, which in itself may have accounted for the long delay in despatching it to Paris.

It would be a great mistake to judge of the epistolary style of Madame Bonaparte from this

specimen, of which neither the wording nor the contents resembled her in the least. Apart from the fact that her French was faulty, and that it was therefore impossible for her to select choice and suitable expressions, it was utterly opposed to her nature to make use of mere phrases. The affected politeness and obligingness of the letter was not in accordance with her nature. In the whole course of her long life she wrote but few autograph letters, though she dictated a large number, of which about 150 have been preserved by her descendants down to the present time.

Her imperfect knowledge of the French language obliged her to dictate the majority of her correspondence in Italian, and the letters written by her own hand belong mainly to the early days of her marriage and widowhood in Corsica, and during the Republic, when she was living in Provence.

CHAPTER XII.

Pauline and Fréron—Elisa and Felix Baciocchi—Journey to Italy—Residence in Montebello—Letitia returns to Corsica—Letters from Letitia to Madame Clary.

In a former chapter I alluded to the presence of the deputies Barras and Fréron in Marseilles, and it will be remembered that an intimacy had sprung up between the latter and Pauline, which the mother does not appear to have checked by any serious measures. Far too young and thoughtless to be influenced by interest, which, moreover, would not have been in accordance with her character, the girl loved Fréron with all her heart—or she imagined that she did so.

Letitia never approved of their union, and in spite of her daughter's repeated prayers, she inexorably refused her consent, while the opposition served but to strengthen the fervour of the girl's attachment.*

* "Infamous Fréron, that revolutionary ruffian, had a wife whom he had abandoned, and whom he doubtless repented not having silenced by the guillotine, as he had silenced some thousand others in his time."—*Court and Camp of Bonaparte.*

"I swear, dear Stanislas," she wrote, March, 1796, to Fréron, "that I will never love another but you. My heart cannot be shared, it is wholly yours, and who dare oppose the union of two souls whose aim is happiness, and who find it in mutual love? No, my friend! Neither mamma nor any human being can deny you my hand."

The love affair between his sister and Fréron had just reached this crisis when Napoleon visited his family at Marseilles on his way to Italy. He and Joseph shared the opinion of their mother that they must not be allowed to marry, but Lucien sided with the lovers. Napoleon wrote to Letitia from head-quarters that he would not hear another word about the match, and as follows to his wife: "Please use your influence about this affair of Pauline's. It is my will that she shall never marry Fréron." And he wrote to Lucien in the same strain. Of her own accord, as well as to fulfil her husband's wish, Josephine did her utmost to prevent the marriage, but her efforts only roused the wrath of Pauline, who was enraged that the Creole should meddle with her love affairs, and hinder her from marrying the man of her choice. She never really forgave her sister-in-law, and remembered her interference with bitterness long after she was united to another.

The lovers continued to write to each other, Pauline frequently in Italian verse, and one of

her letters closes with the following glowing effusion in that language.

"Ti amo sempre e passionatissimamente, per sempre amo, bell' idol mio, sei cuore mio, tenero amico, ti amo, amo, amo, amo, ti amatissimo amante."

She wrote to her brother to implore him to alter his decision, but found him inexorable, and by degrees her very efforts became weakened, for she met with but little encouragement at home. Her sister, Elisa, in whom she had confided, helped her with her correspondence, but Napoleon's moral influence, which increased with each victory that he won, was still able to keep Lucien's opposition in check. The girl had to yield, even while exclaiming :

"I shall die of it—that's all!"

She sent a last urgent appeal to the General, dictated probably by Elisa and Lucien, for she herself was no "ready writer" at this time. She wrote : "As far as I am concerned, I would rather remain unhappy for ever than marry without your consent and thus bring down your curse upon my head, but if you had only seen, dear Napoleon, for whom I have always entertained the most tender affection, the floods of tears that your letter caused me to shed, I am positive that your heart would have been touched."

For a time the merry girl was really very sad, but by decrees became by no means as

inconsolable as she thought herself, and she began to long for some excitement. The comparative wealth of the family, as contrasted with the poverty that oppressed them when she first made the acquaintance of Fréron, contributed not a little to assuage her grief, while her youth, the perfect health which she enjoyed, her natural light-heartedness, all helped gradually to soften the first great disappointment of her life.

Within her own family, and outside in the world, her brother's extraordinary progress formed the one topic of conversation. During a somewhat longer truce—after repeated victories—he more than once requested his wife to join him at head-quarters in Montebello, a small town in the neighbourhood of Verona, where he had taken up his residence in a "noble castle," which he occupied from about the middle of March till the end of June, 1797.

After a long delay, Josephine at length thought it advisable to comply with his wishes, but she purposely avoided Marseilles, where she had long been expected, on account of her dislike to make the acquaintance of her mother-in-law. Napoleon wished them to meet, and he himself longed to see his mother and sisters again, which decided him to invite them on a visit.

Elisa Bonaparte had recently married Felix Baciocchi, by no means a gifted man, rather the contrary, but in his mother-in-law's eyes he had

the great advantage of being a Corsican by birth, with a home in Ajaccio; besides which, Elisa was the plainest, as well as the least loving and sympathetic, of her daughters. Letitia had written to Napoleon about the match, to which "he flatly refused his consent," but his objection arrived too late, the civil marriage having already taken place.

The whole family left for Italy, Joseph Fesch with Elisa and Baciocchi one day, and Letitia with her daughters Pauline and Caroline following on the next; they sailed from Marseilles at the end of May, and reached Genoa in the midst of the war.

The General had not been informed of the date of his mother's arrival, the armistice was at an end, fighting might begin again at any moment, and the travellers became exposed to the greatest dangers. One of Napoleon's officers volunteered to protect Madame Bonaparte and her daughters, and to place them under a guard of soldiers, if it should be necessary, but Letitia would not hear of it, exclaiming:

"I have nothing to fear; my son has hostages in captivity belonging to the most influential men of the Republic. Hasten on in advance, and acquaint him of my arrival; I shall continue my journey to-morrow."

The officer obeyed, and immediately the General heard of the approach of his mother,

he mounted his horse and rode to meet her. He had not seen her since his visit to Marseilles and his brilliant victories at Montenotte, Arcola, and Rivoli.

Letitia contemplated her son with pardonable pride, as she said, after pressing him to her heart: "O Napoleon! I am at this moment the happiest of mothers."

Napoleon has told us that these words of his mother were among the most precious rewards of his work.

She looked earnestly at him, and was troubled to see him so thin.

"You are killing yourself," she said.

"On the contrary, it seems to me that I am living," he replied, with a smile.

"Say, rather, that you will live in the future," objected his mother.

"Well, Signora, is that to die?"

Letitia and her daughters arrived at Montebello in the full beauty of an Italian spring, when nature seemed to have donned her very best, in order to receive the mother of Italy's deliverer with becoming heartiness, and the impressionable inhabitants were delighted, almost to madness, to have the family of Napoleon in their midst. Illuminations were arranged in their honour, and crowds were never weary of shouting "Evviva il liberatore dell' Italia! Evviva il Generale Buonaparte!"

Days and weeks passed quickly away, taken up with continual excursions, including a short visit to Milan, besides which the General and his wife entertained sumptuously, and made their guests most comfortable and happy. The genial warmth of the southern climate had effaced the last trace of melancholy from Pauline's lovely face, and a round of gaiety, with gallant young officers at her beck and call from morning to night, had rendered the likeness of Fréron very faint and pale. She had always been Napoleon's favourite sister, and he wanted her to be happy, so that when his friend General Leclerc sought her hand, he favoured his suit and gained the consent of his mother. Pauline believed herself in love for the second time, and the wedding took place at once. Letitia had felt convinced that Napoleon would not refuse his sanction to the completion of the union between her eldest daughter and Felix Baciocchi, and it turned out as she had foreseen, that her son would not allow himself to be more difficult to please in his sister's choice of a husband than his mother had been, and that he simply accepted the accomplished fact.

Josephine fulfilled her duties as hostess with grace and tact, to the entire satisfaction of her husband, and by her amiable attentions made each guest feel that he or she was the sole object of her solicitude. She showed herself

particularly courteous to Napoleon's relations, especially at first, and hoped to have softened their objections against her. Many years later, Napoleon observed :

"My wife behaved as in duty bound to her husband's mother; she overwhelmed her with attentions and consideration, treated my sisters with equal kindness, and did not even overlook Baciocchi."

But all her efforts could not penetrate the icy wall behind which her mother-in-law had entrenched herself, and it became evident, even in Montebello, that there existed an absolute absence of understanding and sympathy between the two women who stood in the closest relationship to Napoleon. Letitia could not pardon Josephine's frivolity, of which she had heard from her son, and had now been able to see for herself; besides which, she could find no excuse for her boundless extravagance. She would have preferred a less giddy and superficial, as well as a far more economical, wife for her son; and she grieved over a marriage which in her eyes could never contribute to his happiness.

The severe and dignified matron looked down from the pedestal of motherly pride, to which the birth of thirteen children had raised her, with scorn on the daughter-in-law who was not likely to present her husband with one child. She despised her too for her coquetry, her immodest

style of dress, her graciousness bestowed on any man rather than on her husband, and for the lap-dogs which she dragged about with her and loaded with caresses such as Letitia had probably never bestowed even upon her children. The breach widened day by day, on account of the ceaseless friction between her daughter-in-law and her own daughters, which tended to curtail the family meeting, and immediately after the marriage of Pauline, Bonaparte prepared to leave for Passeriano in Friuli, in order to negotiate with the Austrian deputies. Letitia returned to Marseilles, from whence she embarked for Ajaccio. Corsica was once again under French rule, and with the prospect of happier and brighter days, she longed to revisit old scenes and to rebuild the house which had been plundered and burnt after her flight.

The wedding had taken place June 14th, and in the following month we find her at home in Corsica, whither she had returned like a little queen, radiant in her happiness as a mother But her way of life was as simple as it had been in former days, and she kept house exactly as before, with the help of old Saveria, who had remained faithful in adversity and prosperity.

She was accompanied by Elisa and her husband, who, thanks to the favour of his powerful brother-in-law, had been promoted to the rank of general and commandant of the citadel of Ajaccio.

Lucien Bonaparte had also been provided with a military post on the island, where he resided with his wife and children. Letitia eagerly set about the most urgent repairs to her house, and by her restless energy brought on a fever, which rendered her prostrate for some time. Many an hour was spent in the old cathedral of Ajaccio, where she knelt in silence with her face hidden in her hands, as she allowed her thoughts to linger with regret on the days that were gone. But time effects many things, and the proud woman hardly remembered the scornful looks, the mocking jeers, and the slanderous words which had darkened her last days in Corsica—the recollection had at least so far faded, that not a trace of bitterness remained. She was enjoying a moment's pause in the hunted journey of her life, when she could contemplate with calm the days that had come and gone since she had left, and she felt that the spot where she had played as a child, and where the bright hours of her youth had been spent, would always be dear to her.

Her victorious son was preparing to return to France, and the Corsican General who had set out for Nice to take the command of an army in rags, pursued by the mocking jeers of petty papers, had proved himself as great as any of the military leaders of his century, while the new name was on the lips of all, not only in France, but throughout Europe ; and his likeness, painted

in Milan, had been reproduced in hundreds and thousands of copies, while crowds that congregated in front of the shop windows hustled and jostled each other almost to death to gain a glimpse of one of them. Covered with laurels, December 5th, 1797, he reached Ajaccio, where his mother was then residing. Two characteristic letters of this period are extant from Madame Bonaparte to her friend Madame Clary :—

"Ajaccio, 5th Frimaire, year of the Republic VI. (November, 25th, 1797).

My very dear friend,—

I received with great pleasure your letter dated 19th Brumaire, with the repeated assurances of your attachment and friendship towards myself and our General, which gave me hearty satisfaction. Your devotion is nothing new to me, who on so many occasions have received substantial proofs of your love, and I beg you to accept the expression of my gratitude. Pray that God will protect the man who has consecrated his life, not so much to the happiness of his family, as to the welfare of the whole of France. May he be permitted to restore good fortune to the multitudes to whom it is due!

Captain Bastelica has brought the things you mentioned as for me ; the carriage and the small hexagons for the floor. With reference to these last, I must remark that I have not found as many

as I expected, and you did not name the number. Will you kindly tell me how many you sent to him that I may be able to make my calculations?

I enclose patterns for some doorsteps, which I beg you to be kind enough to have made as quickly as possible and forwarded to me by the first opportunity, together with 3000 tiles. Do not send any more lime; I have sufficient. The agent will bring you a sack of our island chestnuts, and I beg you to give a few of them to Citizen Four, with hearty greetings from me. Keep the others yourself as a token of my gratitude for all the trouble I am causing you.

Farewell! Remember me to your husband, your mother, and your sister, and believe that I shall remain as long as my life lasts,

Your sincere friend,

BONAPARTE."

The second letter was written a few months later:—

"To the Citizeness Clary, Rue Gay,
Marseilles.

Ajaccio, 28th Germinal, year of the Republic VI.
(April 17th, 1798).

My dear friend,

I wrote to you by Lucien to ask you to send me on the return of the ship, sufficient paper for two rooms, one red and white, the other yellow. I also request you to be good enough to

let me have three rolls of red paper like the pattern, which the agent Borbun will give you, and eight rolls with a bright red border and roses (No. 2). I should also like three small clocks for the sitting-rooms and a packet of white linen cord for the window blinds. I am very sorry to give you so much trouble.

Hearty remembrances to your mother and the whole family.

Farewell, my dear friend.

If you can meet with four arm-chairs and a sofa to match, covered with modern silk damask, be so good as to buy them for me, and let me have all the things by the first opportunity.

Adieu, may you keep in good health.

THE MOTHER BONAPARTE."

CHAPTER XIII.

Letitia returns to France—Napoleon's arrival from Egypt—Disagreement between Josephine and the Bonaparte family—The hope of a separation diminishes—The 18th and 19th Brumaire.

WHILE Bonaparte—as he now styled himself—was absent on his memorable expedition in Egypt, Letitia remained quietly in Corsica, where she received very irregular accounts of her son's doings at the Battle of the Pyramids, the surrender of Cairo, and the storming of Jaffa. The report of his death reached her ears during a soirée in Ajaccio, when she observed with perfect confidence :

"My son will not perish miserably in Egypt, to the delight of his enemies; I feel persuaded that he will be spared for yet greater undertakings."

It was now towards the middle of the seventh year of the Republic, 1799 (the General having left for Egypt, May 19th, 1798), and most of the members of the Bonaparte family were assembled in the capital.

Napoleon's brothers had not been overlooked in connection with his own promotion. Joseph accompanied the Commander-in-Chief to Italy, where he fulfilled many missions and was appointed Envoy at the Papal Court ; but disturbances in Rome obliged him to leave the city, and return to Paris, where he was elected a member of the Council of Five Hundred (established August 22nd, 1795). Lucien belonged to the Council as Deputy for Corsica, and had recently taken up his residence in the capital, where his wife Christine had gained universal esteem and affection by her hearty good-nature and simple manners.

Both sons and daughters-in-law were anxious to have the mother in their midst again, and her brother Joseph Fesch went to Corsica to fetch her, but repeated storms delayed their return, and it was with deep emotion that Letitia saw herself once more on the point of leaving Ajaccio and bidding farewell to her acquaintances, who all parted from her with the words : "We shall see you again, Signora Bonaparte."

But she herself had a strong presentiment that she was saying a final adieu to her native island, as she wept and embraced the friends who accompanied her to the ship.

On her arrival in France, she removed her daughter Caroline from Madame Campan's school in St. Denis, and took a suite of rooms in

her son Joseph's large house in the Rue du Rocher.

This Corsican family, who but six years previously had landed in such poverty and distress at Toulon, were now people of position, with spacious residences in the capital and villas in the country. The intercourse between Josephine and her husband's family had become more and more strained, and her flighty conduct during the absence of the General had aroused the suspicions of her brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, who had repeated much that was unfavourable about her by letter to Letitia. It was therefore not unnatural that she should be willing to listen to the loud representations of her children that a separation between Josephine and her son was imperative. There were many who did not believe in Napoleon's return, and the announcement that the General had landed in France was almost overwhelming in its suddenness.

Shortly before his arrival, his wife had become closely intimate with several of his enemies, and was naturally anxious how this would affect the General, especially as she foresaw that the Bonaparte family would make use of the intimacy to bring about her disgrace. She set out to meet her husband early on the morning of the 19th Vendémiaire, accompanied by Louis Bonaparte, and as they did not know which route he would be likely to follow, they drove through Burgundy,

one of his favourite provinces. But, unfortunately, he had chosen another road, and when he reached Paris the 24th Vendémiaire, it was to find his house desolate, as his wife and brother had not returned from their fruitless journey.

His mother and other members of the family were at once acquainted with his arrival, and hastened to the house to find him thoroughly out of temper on discovering the rooms empty and his wife absent. The fact that she was not with his family placed an additional weapon in the hands of her detractors to strengthen their cause with him. Rumours had reached him even in Egypt that had induced him to doubt her conjugal fidelity, and it naturally struck him now, that feeling herself unworthy, she had fled from the task of welcoming her insulted husband.

The Bonapartes believed themselves triumphant, especially when they heard that Napoleon had shut himself in his room and refused to see Josephine on her return. But he had never ceased to love his wife, and after supplicating him with tears and prayers for many days, her children, Eugène and Hortense, succeeded in softening his heart. The reconciliation was complete, and the intercourse between husband and wife became even more cordial than before, though not one of his own family ever approved of his forgiveness.

In the meantime serious plans were occupying

the mind of the conqueror, who had lost all confidence in the Directory, and by means of power and intrigue was securing to himself adherents to pave the way for the *coup d'état* which he had long been contemplating. Lucien had achieved brilliant success as an orator in the Council of the five Hundred, of which he had become President a few days before the General's return from Egypt, and he spared no pains to smooth his brother's path by untiring enthusiasm and startling ubiquity.*

Proceedings began the 18th Brumaire (November 10th, 1799), and words fail to describe the excited conduct of the Parisians as the crisis approached. The streets were so thronged with riders and carriages that progress was almost impossible, and messengers arrived every few minutes at the Rue Chanteraine with news for Napoleon, who sat at a table with his pistols ready to hand.

Madame Letitia, who preferred to be surrounded by Corsicans, had been happy in discovering the friend of her youth, Panoria de Permon, who had been her near neighbour in Ajaccio, and whom she had loved as a sister. It will be remembered too that her husband, Carlo di Bonaparte, died in the Permons' house

* "He probably hastened the return of Napoleon, and was certainly the chief instrument of the Revolution which followed."—*Court and Camp of Bonaparte.*

at Montpellier. There existed a strong mutual attachment between these two women, who were always content in each other's society, and could spend hours together, day after day, in small talk concerning the old times in Corsica.

Accompanied by her daughter, the wife of General Junot, Madame Permon went at once to the elder Madame Bonaparte to be with her during these days of anxiety about her sons, and they remained until repeated messages from Lucien had somewhat reassured his mother. It was not only the fate of Napoleon that was at stake ; if the *coup d'état* should prove a mistake, exile, or even he scaffold, must have been inevitable for his brothers, their friends and adherents, as well as for himself.

Letitia's strong confidence never forsook her, and it was only her deadly pallor and a passing shudder at any unexpected sound that betrayed her intense anxiety.

The Revolution of the 18th Brumaire (November 10th) was accomplished, but the Parisians were hardly aware of it, and the close of the *coup d'état* the day following found the city undisturbed, though the ladies of the Bonaparte family were so imperfectly cognisant of all that was going on. Letitia and Pauline resolved to drive to the house of Madame de Permon, who expressed her surprise that her

friend had not gone direct to Josephine for accurate information.

"Signora Panoria! I cannot go to her, if I want to calm my own heart," answered Letitia. "I see my sons happy with my other daughters-in-law, but with her—no, no!" And she continued to pour forth her woes to Madame Permon in her native language, which always remained familiar to her. In these moments of poignant anguish about her children, she recalled the troublous times when she herself had shared in the Corsican struggle for independence, and related some of her youthful experiences.

While Madame Junot was quietly listening to the conversation of her elders, Pauline had seated herself in front of a large mirror, in which she could contemplate her beauty while she arranged the folds of her gown and the cashmere shawl which she had thrown over her shoulders. Thus the hours sped on; the mother was convinced that her sons were exposed to danger, and her anxiety had increased almost beyond her control; when, in order to pass away the time, Pauline made the suggestion that they should go to the play, which was eagerly seized by the elder ladies, and they drove at once to the Freydeau theatre, where *L'Auteur dans son Ménage* was being acted that evening. Letitia was highly wrought and nervous all through the performance; she said nothing, but her eyes were continually

turned towards the door of their box, as though she were momentarily expecting a messenger with news of her sons. There was a slight disturbance in the pit during one of the interludes, occasioned by the capture of a thief, which caused Madame Bonaparte to shudder, but she did not speak. Then the curtain rose again, and the play continued till the actors suddenly stopped, and one of them came forward to shout in a loud voice to the spectators :

"Citizens! Traitors to our Fatherland have attempted to assassinate General Bonaparte!"

Pauline Leclerc uttered a piercing shriek, which, in spite of the confusion caused by the announcement, was so penetrating that every look was directed towards the box occupied by the four ladies, where she continued to scream vehemently, in spite of her mother's efforts to pacify her. Letitia herself was deadly pale, and she trembled so violently that she could hardly grasp a glass of water that had been brought to her for her daughter. It was now half-past nine, and the ladies were preparing to leave the theatre. Madame Bonaparte had dismissed her own carriage, but Madame de Permon's footman, who was waiting in the vestibule, told her that his mistress's was outside.

"I will drive you and Pauline home," Madame de Permon said to her friend.

"No," answered Letitia, "now we *must* go

to my daughter-in-law, in the Rue Chanteraine. At this juncture, it is only from her that we can get reliable news."

She was quivering from head to foot, almost powerless to move, but without a tear, and outwardly perfectly self-possessed. Madame de Permon's carriage was only built for two persons, but the four ladies managed to seat themselves in it, and were driven with all speed to the General's house, where they found the approach, the yard, and every available spot tightly packed with carriages, horses, and pedestrians, all jostling one another amid deafening noise and blinding dust. From one of the officers, who were hurrying about in every direction, they learnt that Napoleon and his brothers were safe, and that the former had proved as complete a conqueror as on so many previous occasions.

His opponents had been dispersed by force of arms, a new constitution had been proposed and accepted; two Consuls and a First Consul were to rule the nation, which was nominally a Republic, but Napoleon was First Consul, and virtual ruler of France.

CHAPTER XIV.

The First Consul removes to the Luxembourg, and finally to the Tuileries—Caroline and Pauline—The mother's homeliness—Lucien and Napoleon—Lucien's second marriage—His exile—Letitia follows him to Italy.

THE *coup d'état* of the 18th Brumaire had freed France from a weak negative government, when the people had entrusted the reins of power to the hero of Italy, who had become their pride and their hope. Everything was changed, strength took the place of weakness, rule and method dissolved anarchy, and a firm intelligent *régime* was the result in the course of three months. Two days after this radical alteration, the Consuls took up their residence in the Luxembourg, and all the public buildings, as well as many private houses, were illuminated the same evening. From the very moment that Bonaparte began to inhabit one of the Royal Palaces, he looked upon himself as sole ruler in France.

"That pike will soon slay the other pikes," observed Madame de Permon to Letitia.

"O Panoria!" exclaimed her friend reproachfully, who, as well as most people, was still confident in the sincerity of his Republican sentiments.

The three Consuls lived in the Luxembourg till February 19th, 1800, when Napoleon and his wife removed to the Tuileries. He begged his mother to join him in the old palace, but she did not take to the place, and preferred to remain in her own apartments in Joseph's house. We know that she had a far higher opinion of her daughter-in-law Julie than she had of Josephine, and besides, the luxury and splendour of an almost Imperial home in no way accorded with her simple tastes; she never even crossed the threshold of the Tuileries without anxiety, and seemed overshadowed by the presentiment of that day when her son should leave it for ever.

The day following his entrance into the palace, Napoleon held a grand review on the Place du Carrousel, which Letitia witnessed from the balcony, seated by the side of Josephine and surrounded by the ladies of her family and the highest officials of the Republic.

The review was only the beginning of a series of brilliant fetes, at which both civil and military authorities did homage to the First Consul, but his mother was merely present in deference to the wishes of her son, and to form a centre for all her children. She had far too keen a recollection

of the former trials of her life to be able to contemplate the future without misgivings.

In the course of this same winter her youngest daughter Caroline was married to General Murat, who rose "from the very dregs of society to the kingly dignity." *

Both Caroline and Pauline were inordinately vain, and their gowns frequently cost 10,000 to 15,000 francs, in addition to the costly pearls and diamonds with which they were embroidered.

The mother's influence over her daughters was very slight after their marriage, though her hearty interest in their welfare remained as strong as ever. The simple *bourgeoise*, with her modest tastes, belonged to another age, to totally different conditions, and it was hard for her to follow either Elisa, the ambitious patroness of the fine arts, or the vain power-loving Caroline, or the kind-hearted but frivolous Pauline, whom she best loved, and whose companionship afforded her the greatest satisfaction.

Georgette Ducrest, an intimate friend of Josephine, has left *Mémoires*, in which she speaks as follows of Letitia during the Consulate:

"Madame Bonaparte appeared to be an amiable woman, quite unpretentious, and more

* "His father was the keeper of an *Auberge* or humble country inn, who, having once been steward to the Talleyrands, enjoyed, in some measure, the prestige of that ancient and wealthy family."—*Court and Camp of Bonaparte.*

than simple in her dress. For a visit of ten or twelve days to her daughter Pauline Leclerc in the country she provided herself with one single gown, and that of common summer material.

"Pauline derided her parsimony, when her mother rejoined:

"'Be silent, extravagant child. I must lay by for your brothers, who are not yet all provided for. You are young enough to think of nothing but pleasure; but at my age we think more seriously of things, and I will never allow Bonaparte to have it in his power to complain that we have devoured all his substance. You abuse his goodness.'"

The same writer further observes: "She was very easy to live with, satisfied with everything, content to dine at irregular hours when we went excursions, and delighted to hear 'all about it' in detail, if she had not been with us. If you wished to please her, you had only to speak in praise of her children, which was always sufficient to cause her delight. Her countenance, generally rather cold, became marvellously animated on hearing of those whom she loved so dearly."

We have seen that her son Lucien had exercised great influence over the events of the 18th and 19th Brumaire, those fateful days during which he had developed daring energy and brilliant courage. The portfolio of the interior was his reward, and he fulfilled his duties with

zeal, until his stubborn character came into collision with the strong self-will of the First Consul. His behaviour during the *coup d'etat* aroused such strong opposition and persecution, that his mother, who was especially devoted to her son, and who was convinced that the hostile attacks emanated from the Minister of Police, Fouché, went to the First Consul to complain to him about the matter. Josephine, who had reasons for protecting the Minister of Police, was present when Letitia demanded punishment for his behaviour towards Lucien, and a violent scene ensued between the two ladies, with tears on the part of Josephine. As she was leaving, Madame Bonaparte begged her daughter-in-law to inform "her friend Fouché" that she believed her arm was long enough to make any man rue the day in which he dared to slander her sons. The First Consul, who accompanied his mother to the carriage, remarked that it was very evident that she was not reading the English newspapers, which spoke with censure, not only of her darling Lucien, but of the whole Bonaparte family.

"That is quite possible," she replied. "In the meantime, I am powerless as regards the English papers, but it is quite another matter with reference to Fouché!"

A violent quarrel was the result, in November, 1800, between Lucien on the one side, and the First Consul and Fouché on the other, when the

younger brother insultingly reminded Napoleon that it was he who secured him the Consular authority. Bonaparte's impulse was to dismiss him instantly from the Ministry, but the Consul Cambacères urged the advisability of sending him as Ambassador to Madrid, where his special mission should be to weaken the English influence at this Court, in favour of French ascendancy. Lucien zealously promoted the designs of his brother, and an alliance with Spain was signed March 21st, 1801. The wish for a separation between Napoleon and Josephine had never been abandoned in the Bonaparte family, and while Lucien was Ambassador in Spain, he suggested that his brother should divorce this childless wife and marry the Infanta Isabella, who afterwards became Queen of the two Sicilies. The proposition reached the ears of Josephine, who was still exercising considerable influence over her husband, and a stormy scene resulted, in which her daughter Hortense, who was a great favourite with her stepfather, interceded for her mother. Napoleon was softened by the tears of the two women, and ordered his brother to arrest impending negotiations instantly.

Lucien's wife had died during his residence in Spain, and on his return to Paris he made the acquaintance of Madame Alexandrine Jouberthou, a clever, beautiful woman, "distinguished for her gallantries," whom he had first seen as the

mistress of Count Laborde. He fell madly in love with her, and never rested until she accepted him too as her lover. A son was born to them, and when she soon afterwards became a widow, he resolved to make her his wife. He had amassed enormous wealth when in Spain, and the magnificence which he displayed on his return excited universal attention, including the strong disapproval of the First Consul, though the breach between them only became radically serious when Napoleon was informed of the recent marriage, which had been privately solemnised. The powerful ruler had long contemplated royal alliances for his relatives, and the dowager queen of Etruria had been assigned to Lucien. He was therefore violently enraged when he found that he had married without his knowledge and consent. Letitia again took the part of the younger, and hoped to obtain his pardon. But the First Consul was inexorable, and blamed her for preferring this son to all her other children.

"My love is always the deepest for the most unhappy," she replied.

"If you behave prudently," she said to Lucien, "the Consul will receive you again of his own accord. He is perfectly well aware that he has no right to require you to marry to please him. He did not consult your taste—not even mine!"

Lucien was commanded to leave France, and resolved to take up his residence at Rome. It

was Easter, 1804; the house was already dismantled, the carriages that were to convey him and his family away from Paris were standing ready packed in the court-yard, and the post-horses were ordered. Joseph and he were walking up and down in the picture gallery, while Letitia and Lucien's wife were seated on a sofa by the fireplace, when the clock struck eleven. The mother rose and went up to her sons, who had stopped in their walk to count the strokes, and with nervous anxiety, taking Joseph's hand into her own, she said in a voice choked with tears, in spite of her effort to control it: "Go, my son! You must separate. Listen what o'clock it is." "Not yet, mother," replied Joseph. "Lucien has just promised me to wait till midnight, for I am still hopeful that the Consul will recall him."

"No, my son! Napoleon will never recall his brother; he does not wish to have him near him."

"Mother, why should he not wish it? If Lucien refrains from opposing his will, our brother cannot continue to be angry with him." Letitia had resumed her seat, and after a moment, Joseph again broke the deep silence, as he exclaimed:

"It is only half-past eleven, the Consul does not go to bed before midnight. Mother, shall I go and plead with him for my brother?"

She did not reply, till Joseph had repeated his question three times, when the strong-minded

Corsican rose with an indescribable expression of pain and wounded motherly pride, as she said :

"Yes, my son, go you, his elder brother, and entreat him to allow Lucien to remain, that he may answer you as he answered me, yes, even Josephine : 'Those who grieve at his departure may accompany him.'" Then she continued excitedly :

"Yes, I shall go too, not with you, Lucien, but very soon, and this will spare him the poignancy of seeing how persistently I cling to you." She sank back on the sofa, choked with sobs.

Joseph had not lost all hope that a messenger might yet arrive from Napoleon, but midnight struck, not another sound was heard, and Lucien, taking his wife by the hand, knelt with her before Letitia, who only said, "Till we meet again as soon as possible in Rome," and left the room.

"Poor mother!" exclaimed Lucien, who has described the scene in his *Mémoires*, "how terribly you suffered at that time!"

He left the following morning with his family, and in spite of the representations of her other children, Letitia remained unshaken in her resolution to share his exile.

Her friend, Madame Etienne Clary, of Marseilles, Joseph Bonaparte's sister-in-law, accompanied her and remained with her in Rome, as well as several other ladies and gentlemen, and her children's old nurse, Saveria.

Her son-in-law, General Leclerc, had died in St. Domingo in 1802, and in January, 1803, his widow returned to France, and occupied for a time the suite of rooms in Joseph's house where her mother had been living. She was suffering from some painful complaint which never entirely left her, but in spite of her weakness and widow's mourning, she was the most lovely woman that eyes could rest on. The immensely wealthy Italian Prince Camillo Borghese had recently arrived in France, and had sought her hand with the approval of the First Consul and her mother, and the couple were now resident in Rome, where Letitia's step-brother was also living. At the close of the Revolution, when his sister's son had been placed at the head of the French Government, he had returned to his priestly calling, and discarded the civil position which he had been compelled to occupy for some years.

The First Consul was clear-sighted enough to see that the Church of Rome would favour absolute power, and the famous Concordat between him and Pius VII. was signed at Paris, July 5th, 1801, when the Roman Catholic Church and the Papal authority were re-established in France.*

* "Napoleon was made in effect the head of the Gallican Church, as bishops were to have their appointments from him, and their investiture from the Pope."

Joseph Fesch had faithfully assisted Napoleon in his friendly advances to Rome, for which he was rewarded with the Archbishopric of Lyons, and preferment to the Cardinalate, January, 1803, while shortly before the departure of Letitia, his nephew had created him Envoy to the Papal Court. In this way Madame Bonaparte found herself in the midst of her dear ones, Lucien and his family, who all loved and honoured her, warm-hearted Pauline, and the brother whom she always looked upon as one of her own children.

The Cardinal addressed the following letter to his nephew, March 31st, 1804 :

"Your mother arrived in Rome the 10th Germinal, Holy Thursday, after travelling incessantly for a week, without even breaking her journey at Lyons or Milan. She was received with the greatest respect on her entering the States of the Church, and lodged in the Papal palace at Loretto. His Holiness had already given orders that a seat should be arranged for her in St. Peter's similar to that occupied by the Queen of Sardinia and the Duke of Mecklenburg, in readiness for her presence at the Easter services. But as it was only possible to place her seat behind those of the Queen and Duke, who had held theirs for more than a year, she felt it advisable to refuse the intended honour, under the pretence of fatigue after her journey. I introduced her to the Pope this morning in the

Quirinal, when she was accompanied by her daughter and Madame Clary, all in full gala-dress, as beseemed the solemn ceremony. She was conducted by the Swiss Guard to the first ante-chamber, where the Gentlemen-in-Waiting received her, and the Guard of Nobles presented arms. The Pope spoke to her of his devotion to you and of the prayers he offers up for your well-being. He told her that he should be delighted to see her frequently, and that he hoped she would remain in his States as long as it suited her. It was she who moved to say farewell after the long conversation.

"The nobility of Rome have hastened to call upon your mother, without waiting for a fixed day of reception, and the eldest member of the Holy College has instructed all the Cardinals to pay their respects to her within twenty-four hours. All, even the Neapolitans, are eager to show her the attention which is usually only accorded to royalty. She has borne herself with singular dignity during all these ceremonies, and I believe that Rome is the very place for her. She will probably remain here, and I shall do my part to make her happy. . . . The journey has greatly refreshed her, and she is looking remarkably well."

CHAPTER XV.

Letitia during the Empire.

NAPOLEON had caused himself to be proclaimed Emperor, and had promoted his brothers Joseph and Louis, as well as his sisters, to the rank of Imperial Highnesses, while Letitia was still living in retirement at Rome. "Our mother is greatly exercised by the thought of all the changes that are taking place," we read in a letter from Lucien to Joseph. "She thinks that the First Consul is making a mistake by assuming the crown of Louis XVI., and is tormented with forebodings which she hardly confesses to me; but she is convinced that there are far more friends to the Republic than Napoleon appears to suspect; and in short, she fears that the Emperor will be assassinated by fanatics."

Madame Bonaparte was a prey to anxiety and disquietude during this voluntary exile, though she felt neither inclination nor calling to share in her son's brilliant career. But although she did

not desire worldly greatness for herself, she felt it acutely that Lucien should be excluded from the privileges and titles which had fallen to the lot of her other children, and it wounded her motherly susceptibilities that her daughters and daughters-in-law should be styled princesses, while her own title had not yet been decided upon in Paris.

Her son Joseph and his family called her "Impératrice Mère," in Rome she was Imperial Highness, while Napoleon was still in doubt as to the most suitable title to give her. His brothers, sisters, and sisters-in-law could use their own or their husband's Christian names: Prince and Princess Joseph, Prince and Princess Louis, Princess Caroline, and so on. But the Emperor's mother could not be called Princess Letitia, without exposing her to be mistaken for one of her daughters, or at least of casting a tinge of juvenility over her, which would have been inappropriate.

Under the Bourbons, the title of "Madame" had been confined to the eldest daughter of the King and to his eldest sister-in-law. After much thought, it was decided that it should be bestowed on Letitia, but in order to obviate all difficulty, if the Emperor should ever have a daughter, the words "Mêre de sa Majesté l'Empereur" were added to that of "Madame." The Emperor never spoke of his mother otherwise than as "Madame," but in the country generally it

gradually became customary to call her "Madame Mère."

It was less difficult for her son and his advisers to settle the rank which his mother was to occupy, and it was finally arranged that Madame's official place should be on the Emperor's right hand, and that she should take precedence of the princes, while the Empress was to retain her position on his left hand and take precedence of the princesses. Napoleon was anxious that his mother should return to France, but she sent him word by Cardinal Fesch that it was her intention to spend the summer in Pisa and Lucca. Before leaving for these towns, she visited her son Lucien at his country seat in Frascati, and it was not till July that she joined her daughter, Pauline Borghese, in order to take the waters with her at Lucca. She then returned to Rome, where she had still many arrangements to make, and where, too, the alarming illness of her friend, Madame Clary, required her helpful presence.

This friend had exercised a singularly strong influence over the elder Madame Bonaparte for over ten years, and had given her an extraordinary proof of devotion by accompanying her to Italy, although she was a woman of large means, and left a beloved husband and seven children in France. The malady proved to be of a very serious nature, and she died in the arms of her

friend, before her husband could reach Rome. The loss was irreparable to Letitia, and it had been already arranged that Etienne Clary should be her chamberlain and his wife her lady-in-waiting. In spite of her lowly birth and simple bringing up, Madame Clary would no doubt have proved a useful guide to Madame in her new position, on account of her sound judgment and tact.

The Emperor expected to welcome his mother in August, but November found her still in Italy. It is probable that the death of her friend retarded her journey for a time, but the slowness with which she finally made her preparations to start was a clear indication how slight was her wish to occupy the place assigned to her on the right hand of the crowned ruler. She left the Papal States, November 14th, and travelled by very easy stages as far as Milan, where she remained a whole week, and was afterwards joined by Lucien, his wife and children. She had latterly been straining every nerve to induce Napoleon to recall his brother and to recognise him as a member of the Imperial family, and here in Milan she was hoping that a courier would arrive with the desired message that the Emperor was ready not only to forgive him, but to effect a perfect reconciliation between them.

She was disappointed, and had to continue her journey alone, to arrive in Paris, December 20th,

several weeks after the coronation had taken place. In spite of the disagreement that had overshadowed the parting between Napoleon and his mother, the meeting on both sides was thoroughly cordial. Lucien's large residence in Paris had been beautifully decorated for her reception, and the Emperor allowed her an income of one million francs, in addition to the use of the larger Trianon, while the smaller one was assigned to Pauline. When the Court was at Fontainebleau or St. Cloud, a suite of rooms was always prepared for her and her daughter, close to those occupied by Napoleon. After the Emperor had placed the crown of Italy on his own head, he wrote the following letter to his mother from Bologna :

"June 24th, 1805.

Madame,

I have purchased Château Pont for you. Send your steward to look over it and take possession. It is my intention to grant sixty thousand francs to furnish it, and you will thus become the owner of one of the loveliest estates in France, which I believe you visited ten years ago ; it is much more beautiful than Brienne. I hope that you will see in what I have done a new proof of my desire to please you.

Your very devoted son,

NAPOLEON."

In her position of Impératrice Mère she had her own Court, but it was as unpretentious as possible, for her simple tastes, as well as bringing up, were never in accordance with the etiquette of a palace. In spite of her son's remonstrances, she lived quietly and modestly, economising a large portion of her million francs, to the intense astonishment of the people, who were accustomed to see women of position squander their money, and could not understand why Madame was so niggardly.

She was appointed patroness of all the benevolent institutions in the Empire, and the convents of the Sisters of Mercy were re-opened. The Minister of the Interior met the nuns in Letitia's house and awarded them medals in her presence, but she shrank from appearing in public in connection with the hospitals or other charitable establishments, and was always stiff and ungenial when she had to preside at their meetings. Her bearing was always that of a refined, noble woman, but utterly uncalculated to make herself popular. She was most unostentatiously generous, although she was generally considered mean and stingy. But if we consider all that she had gone through it is evident that what would be stigmatised as parsimony in the eyes of others would be purely prudent forethought from her own point of view. She would have belied herself if she had not been particular in her money matters; the lesson was

learnt in a hard school, where her natural tendency to economy had been cruelly developed during the last year of her husband's life, as well as during the poverty of herself and her children after their flight from Corsica. She had witnessed the revolutions of fate too frequently to be able to trust implicitly in the durability of dazzling greatness, and she could never forget how she had been obliged to turn every coin again and again when in Marseilles, to calculate its utmost power to procure even bread for her children, while the thought of night after night spent in patching their ragged clothes could never be entirely effaced from her mind.

Everything was changed in the family since those days, except the views and habits of Madame Letitia, and it was a cause of real sorrow to her to watch Elisa, Pauline, and Caroline, as well as their husbands, vying with each other in luxurious extravagance, and she especially reproached Pauline for her wastefulness, as she predicted in the heat of her anger that she would probably end her days in the workhouse.

When her children on their part dared to represent to her that she was far too economical, she would reply :

" Who knows whether all these kings will not some day come and beg their bread of me ? "

It simply led her to retrench all the more in her personal expenses, as she contemplated the

squandering of money on all sides, and reflected how easily great prosperity can be followed by corresponding adversity. She admired her son's genius, but she was well aware that he might abuse it, and even when his Imperial power was at its zenith, she was incessantly tormented with the fear of impending misfortune. "We Corsicans have seen a good many revolutions," she used to say. "All this pomp may come to an end, and what will become of my children? They would turn to me, and it would certainly be better to go to their mother than to strangers who would reject and betray them."

Events proved the wisdom of the Emperor's mother, and her children were thankful for her savings. She must not be reproached for her foresight; but it is hard to restrain a smile at her parsimony on several occasions, when it was almost ridiculous. Pettiness in money matters is never so objectionable as when exhibited by the great—it is a characteristic weakness of the parvenu.

His mother's economy was a thorn in the flesh to Napoleon, and frequently militated against a comfortable feeling between them, for although she never spent half her allowance, she continually applied to him to have it increased, which produced a cool and ceremonious tone in their correspondence.

"How do you like being at Court, Signora

Letitia?" her son used to ask sometimes. "It wearies you, does it not? Well, you don't understand how to enjoy life. Your salons are closed. Look at your daughters, who seem born to their present position. I have given you a house in the capital, and a lovely country villa, with an income of a million francs, and yet you live like a *bourgeoise* of St. Denis. You must not scrape your money together, but spend all that I give you."

"Then you must let me have two millions instead of one," she replied, "for I must economise, it is my nature."

Letitia was probably fifty-two or fifty-three when her son was proclaimed Emperor, and we know that she had been a beauty in her youth. A man, by no means prone to sentimentality, has related that during the Empire she was still sufficiently lovely to inspire amorous feelings, in addition to the respect which she commanded; and even Madame de Rémusat, the friend of the Empress Josephine, but the declared enemy of Bonaparte, was compelled to acknowledge that "the Emperor's mother was very beautiful, and looked remarkably distinguished." As a young woman, she was slim and graceful, and though she became stouter in her more advanced years, she never lost her dignity of presence. Her hands and feet, the latter especially, were like sculpture; she kept her teeth to a great age, and

she had a bewitching smile, which most of her children inherited. Her eyes were not large, but very dark, and she had a bright, clever, penetrating expression. Napoleon had her features, mouth, eyes, and hands, and all her girls resembled her, though Pauline Borghese was the most like her.

Caroline Murat's appearance recalled her in her youth, but Elisa Baciocchi had coarser features and a less agreeable expression; she was a caricature of Napoleon and her mother. The whole family spent every Sunday with the Emperor, and during the absence of Josephine, or, later on, of Marie Louise, it was Madame Mère who presided over his Court; but she abhorred official ceremony and formal gatherings, to which she infinitely preferred the real pleasure of assembling her family round her in her own home. But this enjoyment became more and more rare as her children rose in the social scale, and when she became mother to an Emperor, three kings, a queen, and two reigning princesses, she complained that she had not the companionship of any one of them. While Josephine was at the Tuileries, surrounded by bedizened chamberlains, lackeys with gold lace, and similar-looking adjutants, while the Emperor was interviewing hundreds of foreign princes and diplomatists, Letitia preferred to sit in her own house, to play a game of reversi, and to talk

of old days with her faithful Saveria. Those nearest to her proclaimed their greatness in the public streets, while she preserved the modest retirement of a young girl.

Although she disliked display, she was always careful of her person, and suitably attired for every occasion which she graced by her stately appearance. "But," as the Duke of Abrantès (Junot, who married Laura Permon) used to say, "her shyness was always a hindrance to her in society, as well as her permanent difficulty in expressing herself in French." She preferred Italian, which she generally used in conversation with the Emperor and her other children, though they were accustomed to write to her in French. Napoleon used to say of his mother that she was made to rule a kingdom, and everything proves that she would have made a wise, prudent queen; at any rate she would have headed a small State with success, for she had no interest in "great" politics. Her vocation was to regulate the home, to maintain order in the family, to establish peace, to reconcile conflicting elements, and to be equally outspoken with all.

Celebrated men generally take after their mothers, and Napoleon inherited not only the features, but also the firmness and energy of Letitia, probably too the combativeness that seemed to burn in his veins. She had felt him moving under her heart at the battle of Ponte-Nuovo, as though he were impatient to enter into

the world, and already longing to fight, even before his birth. He did not owe his imagination to her, but his powers of organisation, his sense of order, and his extreme temperance in both eating and drinking were certainly inherited from his mother. When he became the great Emperor, he wished her to change her manners, her language, her tastes, even her feelings; that she should speak in a more commanding tone, and not only direct others in reality, but let it be evident that she was doing so. The ruler of the world, before whom so many bent the knee, was as impotent as against a stone wall when he tried to transform Letitia; he could change her mode of life, but not herself. She maintained her natural, unassuming style, and with characteristic determination, would not even try to improve herself in French. The Emperor was always in her eyes her little "Napolione." He was the conqueror of Europe, but that did not overawe her in the least, and great as he was, she recalled his appearance when he came into the world red and screaming, with a head out of all proportion to his little body. She understood his foibles quite as well as those of her other children, and never scrupled to oppose his pretensions, but if anything untoward happened to him, she was all tenderness, and her support was never failing when others began to mistrust him. Neither the honours that were

showered upon herself, nor the rapid promotion of her children, ever obscured her clear-sightedness, flatterers of either sex were simply abhorrent to her, and one day when a Cardinal was praising her in extravagant terms, she interrupted him by saying :

"My Lord Cardinal, if you speak to me with such flattery to-day, what will be left for you to say to me to-morrow ?"

She never made a fresh acquaintance without fathoming the visitor in a few minutes, and she remarked, after the Duchesse de Chevreuse had been presented to her :

"She does not like us ; I can see it in the beautiful countenance of that woman that she detests the Emperor." She was right, for the Duchess became implicated in a conspiracy against Napoleon, and was exiled.

Madame's Court consisted of two ladies-of-honour, five ladies-in-waiting, a reader, two chamberlains, two equerries, a steward, and a secretary. One of her ladies-in-waiting was, as we have already noticed, the wife of General Junot, Duke of Abrantès (born 1784) daughter of her great friends the Permons, who were a Corsican family, though originally of Greek descent, and using, in addition to their own, the great name of Comnenus, borne by the Emperors of the East. The wife of Marshal d'Avoust, Mesdames Soult, de Fleurier, de St. Pern, and

Fontanges also belonged to her Court. Madame de Fleurier was quite as rigorous a "Madame Etiquette" as the Comtesse de Noailles, who worried and tormented Marie Antoinette;* and she repeated her rules from morning till night, but to deaf ears, for Napoleon's mother was as determined on this point as on so many others.

Madame Fontages was a Creole, beautiful, indolent, but on the whole harmless. Madame de St. Pern was a Corsican.

The evenings were mostly very dull in Madame Mère's salon when reversi and spasmodic conversation formed the only entertainment, though it was a little more lively when Madame de Brisac was present. She did not belong to the household, but Letitia was fond of her society, and invited her frequently. She was very small, exceedingly lively, and in spite of a slight deformity, decidedly coquettish in her dress. Her devotion to her husband was a constant source of amusement, and she was fond of relating how he offered his hand and heart to another, "but I waited patiently until she was dead." Madame de Brisac was rather deaf, and when she was to be presented to the Emperor, she carefully inquired what questions his Majesty would be likely to address to her. The anticipated Court soirée took place, and the lady made her three curtseys before

*See Authorised Translation of Clara Tschudi's "Marie Antoinette," by E. M. Cope.

Napoleon, who asked if her husband was brother to the Duc de Brisac who had been killed during the Revolution, and if he had succeeded to his property. "Department Seine et Oise," replied the lady, who believed that he had asked where she was born.

The Emperor thought the reply very singular, and then asked if she had any children.

"Fifty-two, your Majesty!" she answered with a bright smile and deep curtsey, thinking that he had this time inquired her age.

Napoleon, as is well known, had the highest opinion of women with many children; but this was too much even for him, and he concluded the conversation.

On New Year's Day all the Ministers waited upon Madame Mère to pay their respects, and some of them were her guests in the course of the year, among whom was Cambacères, the Arch-Chancellor (formerly Second Consul), who was always exact in his attention to her. But as she appeared to take but little interest in current politics, and withdrew as much as possible from intercourse with Josephine and her Court, it was generally believed that she was without influence. But this was a mistake. The Emperor was frequently glad of the intervention of his mother in family matters, to smooth differences and persuade his brothers and sisters to act in deference to his wishes; but in addition to this

she was useful to her son by means of their secret correspondence, and it was she who made him acquainted with a conspiracy formed against him by Talleyrand and Fouché during his absence in Spain (1808), which induced him to return to the Capital with all speed.*

Courtiers did not credit her with the power of helping friends or procuring appointments, as mothers of kings were used to do; but she was not without influence in this respect. She was the only member of her family who had remained faithful to the past, and felt it a duty to support the claims of the Corsicans. Those who left her beloved island to seek their fortunes on the Continent, were almost sure to find a patroness in her, and an innumerable host of old friends of her youth, cousins, and cousins' cousins in every degree were the recipients of offices or promotions obtained by her. She wrote urgent letters to the Ministers on their behalf, and if they delayed to accede to her requests, she did not hesitate to appeal a second time in a more decided and peremptory tone than at first.

But, on the whole, she took but little part in the course of events, though she followed them with motherly anxiety, and was often heard to say that the days of her grandeur bore the impress of sorrow rather than of joy.

* The above statement is taken from "Murat, lieutenant de l'Empereur en Espagne, 1808," par le Comte Murat.

Her son could not forgive her want of confidence in the durability of the Imperial edifice, and yet it was her devotion as a mother that made her tremble for the fate of the new Constitution which his genius had created. It appalled her that her Napoleon should bear the weight of such a heavy burden; she was essentially a mother, and longed to be able to remove it from his shoulders. Those around her looked upon her misgivings as an evil dream that could not possibly come true, and behind her back ridiculed the Italian pronunciation of her expressed thought:

"Pourvou que cela doure!" Outward grandeur failed to fill the void of her heart, and in addition to her anxiety respecting the future, she felt distressed that the unprecedented exaltation of her family had destroyed all intimacy, and that the guiding spirit of former days had been quenched by the lust of power.

She had high conceptions of maternal authority, and was pained by the neglect of the Emperor, as well as by the fact that State considerations should determine the marriages of her sons. She despised etiquette, but was easily hurt in her personal relations with her children, and she was fully conscious that the increasing power of Napoleon only widened the breach between them. When she recalled the old days in Ajaccio, when she was in command, and her

little flock blindly obeyed her, when she had the right to let her rod dance on the back of the future conqueror, if he transgressed in the least, when she remembered that in Marseilles she had but to give the sign and her pretty daughters hastened to the market, basket on arm, she could not refrain from thinking that days of poverty and obscurity have their beauty, as surely as those of splendour have their humiliation.

When Roman Catholicism was restored as the State religion in France, she observed to the First Consul :

"I have no need now to box your ears to make you go to church."

"No," answered Napoleon, "it is my turn now to box my mother's ears," as he playfully raised his hand to her cheek. It displeased her, not that he did it, but that he had the right to do it! It was in her eyes subversive of the laws of nature that her son should be her master. In the world at large her good fortune was highly extolled, and a French soldier compared her with the Blessed Virgin in the following lines :

"Dans cette fête solennelle,
Le Français rallumant son antique ferveur,
Honore la Vierge immortelle
Qui porta dans son sein le divin Rédempteur.
Soyez de même et fêtée et chérie !
Chacun ici vous doit cet hommage flatteur.
N'êtes vous pas, comme Marie,
La mère de notre sauveur ?"

The Princesse de Ligne exclaimed at the sight of Letitia :

"Look at her, the happiest among women, whom neither power nor opposition can despoil of the honour of having given birth to the greatest man of our century. She may indeed be proud! A mighty nation bows before her son, and the welkin resounds with shouts of enthusiasm. Her position is the most enviable that fate can allot to a woman. She is beautiful and still looks young, though nobody says, is it possible that she can be his mother!"

Letitia herself said :

"There is a vivid contrast between the outer circumstances of my life and the feelings of my heart. I shall tremble as long as I can suffer." And in her *Mémoïres* she observes : "All men considered me the happiest mother in the world, while my life was one uninterrupted sorrow and martyrdom. I feared that every messenger that came would bring me the awful tidings that the Emperor had died on the field of battle."

CHAPTER XVI.

Louis Bonaparte and Hortense Beauharnais—The Emperor almost at the height of his power—Jerome and Elizabeth Paterson.

THE conduct of Josephine towards her mother-in-law became much more amiable under the Empire. "It was either that good fortune had softened her towards Letitia," says Madame Junot, "or that the Emperor had commanded it, but it is certain that we observed a marked change in her behaviour towards Madame; still, consideration that only arises from politeness and calculation can never be equivalent to hearty, genial attachment."

The Empress took no pains to bring about a better understanding between herself and the other members of the family. She did not fear Joseph's wife, who continued to live in Paris, even after she was Queen of Naples, and evinced the strongest repugnance to leave her quiet home for a throne. Neither was she afraid of Pauline Borghèse, who divided her time between care of her delicate health and the pleasures of society,

who never shared in any intrigue unless absolutely forced into it by her family. The Emperor's youngest sister, Caroline Murat, Grand Duchess of Berg and Cleve, on the contrary, caused real uneasiness to the jealous Empress. She was young and lovely, living in the handsome Elysèe Palace, and enjoying her luxurious elegance to the full; imperious in her demands, but suave in her manners, if it suited her purpose, and especially so towards men whom she wished to captivate; distinctly vulgar when she wished to injure the Empress whom she hated, but possessed of marvellous self-control which justified her sister-in-law's fear of her. Her plan for the downfall of Josephine was cleverly arranged and persistently followed up. In her overweening vanity, she longed for her brother to marry a princess of one of the reigning houses of Europe, and overwhelmed him with persuasions to divorce his wife and select another of royal blood. The fear of being sent away had been like a threatening spectre before the eyes of Josephine for years, and she sought to bring about a marriage between her daughter and one of Napoleon's brothers, hoping by this step to ensure a reconciliation among the different members of the family, as well as to strengthen her own position. She first thought of handsome, reckless Jerome, the youngest, and the spoilt darling of his mother, Napoleon, and Pauline, whom he strikingly

resembled, and who had entertained a boyish affection for Hortense Beauharnais, under the charm of her blue eyes and fair locks, which had once turned his head and retarded his studies. But his dislike to Josephine was so openly persistent that she was forced to abandon the idea of making him her son-in-law, and she therefore turned her attention to Louis Bonaparte, the Emperor's former favourite, whom constant ill-health had transformed into a miserable hypochondriac. He had fallen in love with a young girl whom he had met several times at Madame Campan's school when visiting his sister Caroline, but Napoleon, who objected to the attachment, first sent him away from the capital, and then took him to Egypt, where his love rapidly cooled. Immediately after his return to Paris, he lost his heart a second time to a Mademoiselle Lefèbre, whom he had met in the Tuileries gardens, and whom he knew so slightly, that for some long time he was not even acquainted with her Christian name.

Hortense and Louis mutually disliked each other, and Josephine was aware of the fact, though she persistently tormented the Emperor to promote their union, and finally persuaded Hortense to yield to her wishes. Letitia was deeply grieved at the thought of such a marriage, for she knew of her son's devotion to another, that the girl who was being forced upon him was

repugnant to his feelings, and that they were absolutely unsuited to each other. In spite of her remonstrances and the fact that both bride and bridegroom shuddered at the thought of a union, Josephine never rested till she had extorted consent from all parties, and the wedding was solemnised in Paris, June 4th, 1802. Although she disdained to pretend feelings which she did not possess, Hortense behaved at first with becoming consideration and submission towards her husband, whose suspicious nature, however, allowed nothing good in a member of the Beauharnais family, and saw only coquetry in her advances. He used to say: "She is practising to find out how she can deceive me," and his behaviour towards her was generally harsh and contemptuous. He enlarged upon the frivolity and foibles of the Empress, and intimated that all intercourse between his wife and such a mother must cease, as he added: "You are a Bonaparte now, our interests must be in common, and those of your family are no longer of any concern to you!" Nine months after her marriage, Hortense was confined of a son, and the enemies of the Emperor declared that Napoleon was his father. He was certainly deeply interested in the child, and the more openly he expressed his feelings, the more emphatic became the voice of scandal. Caroline Murat maliciously reported the suspicion to her

brother Louis, who, whether he credited it or not felt his honour assailed, and seized the excuse to torment his wife still more cruelly, and to keep a stricter watch over her.

In 1805 he was appointed Governor of Paris instead of Joachim Murat, who accompanied the Emperor in his campaign, "and attracted the attention of all Europe by his reckless valour and his amazing success." The command of the Imperial Guard, of the National Guard of Paris, and, indeed, of the troops belonging to the department of the capital, was entrusted to Louis. He had never shared in his brother's political ambition, and cared far more for the pleasures of literature than for those of a throne; but all the same he developed a conscientious power for work in the position to which he had been promoted, and Napoleon publicly expressed his satisfaction with his conduct on his return.

The Emperor was rapidly nearing the zenith of his might; he enjoyed the double dignity of supreme ruler in France and King of Italy, the frontiers of the country had been widely extended, and kings, grand-dukes, and princes, the creation of his hand, were on every side. His brother Joseph was King of Naples, and shortly to become King of Spain. His brother-in-law Murat was invested with the grand duchy of Cleve and Berg before receiving "the succession to the throne of Naples." His sister Elisa ruled

in the "sovereign principality," of Lucca, and "her pride was still further gratified by a grant of the grand duchy of Tuscany." Pauline was Duchess of Guastalla. The Arc de Triomphe and the Colonne Vendôme had been erected in Paris, his Minister for Foreign Affairs, Talleyrand, had become Prince of Benevento; his Major-General, Berthier, Prince, first of Neufchâtel, later on of Wagram; and his brother's brother-in-law, Bernadotte, invested with the principality of Ponte-Corvo. All the magnates of Europe bowed to the dust before him, the French nation overwhelmed him with jubilant adulation as became their hero, and he himself shone as the sun round which all lesser lights were expected to revolve.

But it was not only the members of his own family; the children and distant connections of Josephine were also promoted to high places. Her niece, * Stéphanie Beauharnais, was married to the Hereditary Prince of Baden, her son Eugène had been raised to the Viceroyalty of Italy, and married to the daughter of the King of Bavaria, and her daughter was shortly to become queen.

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* "It was a marriage of State, and as the Prince was ugly, unattractive, looked sulky, and made himself disagreeable, everyone pitied his fiancée, a pretty, charming girl, sacrificed, like her cousin Hortense, to the ambition of the Bonapartes."

C. M. Bearne.

France had transformed republicans into monarchists, and the free states of Genoa and Venice had been incorporated, the former into the French Empire, and the latter into the Kingdom of Italy, while the Batavian Republic was to be converted into the Kingdom of Holland. Excitement was naturally keen in Paris respecting the new ruler, and opinions were divided between Louis Bonaparte, his younger brother Jerome, and their brother-in-law Murat. But Napoleon had made his selection in his own self-reliant way, and declared that Louis should be King of Holland, in spite of the remonstrances of his brother, who was ready to make any sacrifice rather than accept the honour, and declared that he could not exist in the damp climate of the new kingdom. The Emperor turned a deaf ear to every excuse, the appointment was confirmed, he meant to be obeyed, and merely observed: "It is better to die on a throne than to live as a French prince." Louis had been trained to submit to his strong-willed brother, though he rebelled against his fate, and his proclamation to the Dutch nation was drawn up in the throne room at the Tuileries, June 6th, in 1806, a few days before he set out for his new kingdom. The Emperor's youngest brother Jerome was in the navy, and about the time of the marriage of Louis and Hortense, had been ordered to America, where he was received with general respect on account of his relationship to Napoleon, but with

especial cordiality in the house of the rich merchant, William Paterson, of Baltimore, whose beautiful daughter Elizabeth captivated his easily won heart. He sought her hand, and in spite of the remonstrances of his own mother and brother, and the misgivings of the bride's father, the wedding was celebrated in July, 1803.

Napoleon had already laid his plans to assume the Imperial crown, and arranged a position for his youngest brother, as well as for the other members of his family, when the love affair of the youth of eighteen came to thwart and exasperate him. In February, 1805, Letitia, at the instance of Napoleon, had declared the marriage invalid; but in the spring of the same year the young couple came over to Europe, with the intention of casting themselves at the feet of the Emperor, though it is doubtful whether Jerome, who knew his brother's temper, anticipated any satisfactory result from their expedition. His wife had no such misgivings, but relying on the power of her beauty, which she was sure would prove irresistible to the Emperor, she already enjoyed the glory of triumph when she should suddenly appear before him, and reduce him as a captive to kneel at her feet.

They arrived safely at Lisbon, but no sooner had the vessel anchored than a messenger informed the young wife that she was forbidden even to land. Her husband left her with tender

assurances of undying devotion, and in spite of her previous protestations, Letitia showed herself willing to recognise her son's marriage, when she had him with her in Paris. Joseph Bonaparte also took his part, and Lucien advised him by letter to rebel and settle down in America, if the Emperor refused to receive his wife. He left the capital with the determination to follow Lucien's counsel, and set off for Milan, where Napoleon and the Court were then residing. The angry autocrat at first denied him admission, and when "the young sinner" was at length ushered into his presence, it was to be overwhelmed with bitter reproaches. Jerome's weakness of character could not withstand the wrath of his brother; he consented to divorce his wife, and as a reward was made rear-admiral and Imperial Highness. Elizabeth, in the meantime, had sailed from Lisbon for Amsterdam, but the vessel was no sooner within sight of the Dutch shore than two men-of-war were at her side, and after waiting in vain for eight days, there was no other course open than to set sail for a kingdom over which Napoleon had no control, and the poor forsaken wife, who was expecting her confinement, finally set foot in England. She was without support, without a friend; her son was born June 7th, 1805, and in October of the same year she returned to America.

In spite of the Pope's persistent refusal

to annul Jerome's marriage with Elizabeth Paterson, Napoleon continued his negotiations to procure him the hand of the Princess Catherine, daughter to the King of Würtemburg, and subsequently to proclaim him King of Westphalia.

CHAPTER XVII.

Napoleon and the Head of the Church—Divorce from Josephine.

DURING the absence of Napoleon in 1806 and 1807 in his campaigns against Prussia and Russia, the salon of Madame Mère wore a gloomy aspect, although Cardinal Fesch spent the winter with his sister, as well as his cheerful, lively young secretary.

"How is it that you are always laughing, while we others are so full of anxiety?" the mistress of the house asked him one day reproachfully.

"Why should I be troubled, Madame?" rejoined the secretary.

"Are you not aware that the Emperor is absent fighting against his enemies?"

"Certainly, Madame! But is that a cause for sorrow? It is not the first time that the Emperor has gone to war, and victory is habitual to him."

"You are right," replied his mother; "and

yet one bullet is sufficient to kill him. God has not pledged Himself to work miracles on his behalf."

Her son returned to her yet again as a mighty conqueror, and with the news that Alexander of Russia, formerly his enemy, had now become his ally. The crown of Westphalia had been bestowed upon Jerome, and Saxony and Würtemburg had been created kingdoms to reward their fidelity to the Emperor. He was the object of enthusiastic acclamation, and Napoleon's day, 1805 (August 15th), proved one of the most brilliant holidays during his government. Bareheaded and seated between the Empress and Madame Letitia on the balcony of the Tuileries, he received the ovations of the people, and felt that his prosperity could rise no higher. But serious clouds were already darkening the horizon.

When the Pope had returned to Rome after the coronation of the Emperor, the worthy prelate had even then brought back with him many an anxious foreboding as to what the future had in store. Napoleon had requested him to renounce his rights as a temporal sovereign, but Pius VII. had refused to comply with his wishes, and as he would not blindly submit to become a party to the conqueror's plans, the States of the Church were speedily occupied by Imperial troops. Napoleon declared that the gift of Charlemagne could be cancelled by a compensation of an annuity of

two million francs, an offer which Pius rejected with scorn. The strife between the Head of the Church and the autocrat of France increased in violence, and Cardinal Fesch strove in vain to promote peace; both sides were grateful for his interference, but neither would allow it to influence them in the least. The Emperor had never encountered such obstinate resistance, nor experienced such mortification as during the struggle. A few days had usually sufficed to obtain what he wished from the sovereigns of Europe, but he was powerless against the Bishop of Rome, who at last fulminated a bull of excommunication against him, to which Napoleon rejoined by moving the Holy Father about from one prison to another.

Letitia was in despair, and few circumstances in her own family lay nearer to her heart than the indignity to the Pope. In one of her letters to Cardinal Fesch, she exclaims:

"I foresee that your nephew will bring about his own downfall and that of the whole family. He ought to be satisfied with what he has already attained, and by striving for more he will lose all. I am never free from anxiety about my family, and I feel convinced I shall never regret that I have secured myself against reverses." Grief at her son's behaviour towards the Head of the Church brought on an illness, and in accordance with the wishes of her physician, she left Paris for Aix-la-Chapelle.

In the meantime, a great event, the divorce from Josephine, was taking place at the Tuileries. We know that Letitia had never liked her, and that several of her sons and daughters had strained every nerve for more than ten years to bring about a separation. But the Empress was beloved by the people, and the plan which seemed more and more likely to be carried out met with censure and regrets. As we have already noticed, Josephine had behaved with extreme levity during the first year of her marriage, and given just ground for angry reproach from her husband. But the tables had been turned since then, and although his wife still held the first place in his heart, as years passed on she had had cause to complain again and again of Napoleon's unfaithfulness. Still, in spite of numerous grounds for jealousy on her part, and constant reasons for annoyance on his side on account of her boundless extravagance, the union on the whole had been hearty and satisfactory. The Empress possessed an almost singular knowledge of her husband's character, a delicate tact in her management of him, complete self-effacement in view of his whims and weaknesses; and in addition, a charm of bewitching amiability that pervaded her whole person, by which, in spite of her increasing years, she was always able to captivate him. Their greatest mutual sorrow was their childlessness. For a time it seemed as though

Napoleon had accustomed himself to look upon the eldest son of Louis and Hortense as his successor, and it was not till the death of the child in 1807, that the idea of a divorce became firmly rooted in his mind. With the one exception of Cardinal Fesch, every member of his family was eager to further the suggestion, and several of his Ministers counselled a divorce, amongst others Fouché, Josephine's lover, who discussed the subject with her, and urged it for the well-being of the country. The Emperor wavered, for ardently as he longed for an heir to his throne, he could not hastily resolve to separate himself from Josephine, who on her part, was weighed down with forebodings, and doubly solicitous to please her husband under the fear of losing him for ever, while he longed to feel himself justified in reproaching her for infidelities which had proved a real source of grief to him in their early married life. But she was well on her guard against the least cause for jealousy, and became a perfect model of gentleness, submission, resignation, and kindness. She tried to forestall his wishes on every occasion, while the sight of her devotion and humility disarmed him, and overwhelmed him with self-reproach.

From the beginning of 1809, Josephine was a mere cipher from a political point of view, and *Le Moniteur* even omitted to offer her the customary official good wishes on the first

day of the year. She tried to win over her mother-in-law, in the vain hope that she disapproved of a divorce, but the neglect of prosperous days had earned for her neither comfort nor support in the hour of trial, and though the strong-minded Corsican might sympathise with her, she was staunch in her approval of the Emperor's decision. She had long feared that Eugène Beauharnais would become his heir, and consequently master of her other sons, and she hoped from the very bottom of her heart that such might never be the case.

After the signing of the Treaty with Austria at Schönbrunn, October 14th, Napoleon again returned in triumph to his own country, and arrived at Fontainebleau at nine o'clock in the morning of the 26th. Josephine felt convinced of her fate when she joined him in the course of the afternoon. The Court left for Paris, November 14th, to welcome the numerous distinguished guests, including members of the Imperial family, who had hastened to do homage to their glorious Emperor, and to submit to him their wishes and petitions. The Kings of Saxony, Bavaria, and Würtemburg, together with several smaller princes of the Confederation of the Rhine, were among the visitors. Brilliant fêtes followed each other in rapid succession, but the intimate life of the Imperial pair was painfully constrained, Napoleon was irritable and embarrassed,

Josephine pre-occupied with gloomy thoughts; she had lost all confidence, and when unobserved, her eyes filled with heavy tears. She had to question those around her, although she shuddered if the fatal word *divorce*, which she herself could not utter, escaped the lips of others. Her son arrived from Milan, December 9th, having been summoned by Napoleon for the purpose of communicating to his mother the fact of her divorce. On the 15th the Arch-Chancellor* Cambacérès and the Imperial House Steward were summoned to the Tuileries, where Josephine and Hortense, dressed in deep mourning, Napoleon, Eugène Beauharnais, and the King of Holland were assembled. The Emperor opened the meeting by expressing his grief that no children had been born of his union with his beloved consort the Empress Josephine, which had caused him to annul his present marriage, and to form a fresh alliance.

"At the age of forty," he concluded, "I may still hope that Providence will give me children, and that I shall be spared sufficiently long to educate them in my own views."

It was then Josephine's turn to speak, and her sufferings were agonising as she held in her trembling hands the paper from which she was to read in the presence of them all, and she had

* A dignity conferred on him at the commencement of the Empire.

hardly pronounced the first word when tears choked her voice, and the document fell to the ground.

She tried again and again to speak the words :

"You see an unhappy woman before you. . . . I shall soon die. . . . The divorce is killing me. . . . Do as you will, I will submit to all."

Her son picked up the paper and gave it to her, but with an excited movement she thrust it into the hand of the Steward, who finished the reading of it for her, while she listened with brimming eyes, though still striving hard to fight against her emotion and hide her gnawing anguish from those present, who were completely overcome, and most of them in tears. After a short speech from Cambacérès, the bill of divorcement was placed before the Emperor and Empress, who signed it first, Letitia placed her name next, and then a little lower down, at a respectful distance from their mother, came the signatures of her children and children-in-law, Louis first, then Jerome, Murat, Eugène, the Queens Julie, Hortense, Catherine, Princess Pauline, and Queen Caroline.

It is an interesting document, still preserved among the National Archives. Napoleon's signature is unusually distinct, and reveals his indomitable will, with a long firm stroke of the pen under the whole name. Josephine's name is

nervously and modestly written, very small ; and to the right, above that of the Empress, and nearly on a level with Napoleon's, we see "Madame" written in large shaky letters, faintly impressed ; but her "M" is similar to her son's "N," and the dash under Madame is shorter, but singularly like his stroke under "Napoleon."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Lucien Bonaparte—Letitia's attempts to reconcile her sons—Her granddaughter Charlotte comes to Paris.

All the children of Letitia were wearing crowns at this time, with one single exception, and the mother was instant in her petitions to the most powerful among them, the creator of their common grandeur, to reconcile himself to his brother Lucien. The Emperor, who had not forgotten his conduct of the 18th Brumaire, was but little disposed to accede to the wishes of his mother and receive into favour the brother who has been styled "the ablest and most ambitious of the Bonapartes, next after Napoleon." Letitia had hoped for a reconciliation as far back as 1805, and on April 7th of that year, she had written to Lecien :

"My Dear Son,

I was grieved to learn from your letter of March 1st that you were then suffering from

fever; *I* have been much better lately. You have doubtless heard of the good impression wrought on the Emperor by your letter. We had a talk together about you the night before he left, and I was greatly rejoiced to learn his good intentions towards you. The hope of a speedy reconciliation between my children is like a comforting balm to my heart, and you know that I cannot rest before it has been effected, but you must help me. You have always been a dutiful son, and the time has come for you to show me the strongest proof of your devotion. Campi will write to tell you what I wish you to do. Your *mother* entreats you. It is not enough to have made a good beginning, the work must be completed. Make use of this favourable opportunity, and do not let the chance of a reconciliation with your brother slip from your grasp; if you do, I fear it may prove the last, and I shall be doomed to spend the remainder of my days in sorrow. In the comforting hope that I shall soon hear that you are on good terms with the Emperor, I embrace you and all your family most cordially.

YOUR LOVING MOTHER."

Napoleon had firmly made up his mind that his brother must be divorced from his wife, whom he always spoke of as "Widow Jouberthou," in order that he might marry a princess, and occupy a throne which the Emperor would provide. But

Lucien was far too deeply attached to his wife to be willing to entertain the idea of a divorce, and thus the first attempt at reconciliation proved a failure. In the meantime Letitia never wearied in her advocacy with the Emperor, and managed to effect a meeting between her two sons at Mantua (1807), in the hope that a conversation might possibly conduce to a better understanding. Lucien describes the interview in his *Mémoires:*

It was evening when he arrived at Mantua, where he was ushered into a large room, lighted by torches, and announced by an officer in a low voice:

"Sire! Your brother Lucien!" He to whom the words were addressed appeared not to hear. He was seated at a large round table entirely covered by an immense map of Spain, the left side of his face leaning on his left hand, while the right was occupied in pricking points on the map with pins of different colours. Lucien did not utter a word, and convinced as he was that it must be the Emperor, he was doubtful too when he saw him so altered; he was not so stout as report had represented him, and at the same time very unlike the "little general" of former days.

At last, the Emperor threw himself back in his chair and touched a bell, when his brother advanced a step or two, and exclaimed:

"Sire! It is I, Lucien!"

Napoleon got up quickly, and Lucien prepared

to embrace him, but the Emperor remained immovable. Then he took his brother's hand, pushed him gently back, and looked at him sharply as he said :

"So it is you! How are you? How is your family? How long is it since you left Rome? Had you a pleasant journey?"

Lucien replied that he was in good health, and that he rejoiced to see that his Majesty also was well.

"Yes," rejoined the Emperor, "I am well, but I am too stout, and I am afraid that my corpulence will increase."

He continued looking at him, took a pinch of snuff, and exclaimed : "I say, you are really quite good-looking! You used to be too thin, but I consider you a handsome man now. However, let us sit down and have a chat."

They seated themselves at the big table, and Napoleon began absently to move about the pins on the map. After a minute's silence, he turned hastily towards his brother, took another pinch of snuff, and asked :

"What have you to tell me?" Then the discussion began, and for six hours the Emperor tried every means in his power to induce his brother to give way. He used persuasion and threats, told him his marriage was invalid, then affirmed that it was legal, but that it must be annulled.

When Lucien persisted in his obstinate determination Napoleon tried to bring about the divorce he so ardently desired by bribery, and promised the Duchy of Parma to "Madame Jouberthou" and her son. "As for yourself," he went on, his eyes fairly sparkling as he struck the map of Spain, "you have but to choose! Will you have Italy? Do you prefer Spain? The choice rests with yourself, if you will only divorce your wife."

But his brother could neither be persuaded nor dazzled; though, fearful lest the Emperor should detain him as a prisoner, if he persisted in his refusal, he prudently observed that he would think the matter over.

But he had no sooner crossed the threshold than he ran to his carriage, which he had ordered to be kept in readiness, and left Mantua without a moment's delay.

Letitia was in despair that the interview, from which she had expected such great things, had proved futile, though she would not even now renounce the object that she had in view, and both she and Pauline sent letter after letter to Lucien to urge him to make the sacrifice that Napoleon demanded. When she heard that the Emperor meant to marry again, she seems to have thought of the possibility of a union with Lucien's eldest daughter by his first wife, and with this end in view she invited the young girl to

Paris, earnestly hoping that she would be the means of effecting a reconciliation between the brothers. It was not till after repeated and urgent invitations that Lucien finally consented to allow his daughter to visit the French capital.

"Lolotte (Charlotte) has arrived," the grandmother wrote to her son. "I shall introduce her to the Emperor as soon as her clothes are in order, and I am confident that she will be kindly received. I will write to you to-morrow and tell you how we are going on, in the earnest hope that God will grant me the one thing wanting to my happiness, the reconciliation of my sons.

YOUR MOTHER."

A few days later she wrote to Lucien's wife about the divorce which the Emperor persisted in demanding. The letter, which is dated March 10th, 1810, proves that Letitia had exhausted all her efforts to make peace, and now entreated her daughter-in-law voluntarily to release her son.

"You know all the misfortunes which your marriage has brought upon our family," she wrote, "and you will understand the cruel burden of them if I propose that you should take the initiative. The Emperor insists on your divorce, and it is for you to urge submission upon Lucien, to demand a separation if he is backward, for

it is the only means by which to escape the disgrace which threatens him, as well as your children and all who are dependent upon you. If, on the other hand, you yield to my entreaties, you will create happiness for your husband and your family. Reflect upon the choice between a life of sorrow and bitterness which you must expect if you are obsinate, and the prospect of a brilliant future, in which your children will be recognised by the Emperor. Finally, if you have any esteem for a mother who has always sacrificed herself for her family, you will yield for my sake, and rest assured that I for my part shall never forget your devotion.

YOUR MOTHER."

Her daughter-in-law had not the least inclination to accede to these wishes, and the hopes centred on the arrival of her grand-daughter had already been shattered. She had overwhelmed Charlotte with kindness, but the young girl could not adapt herself to the life of the Tuileries. She came imbued with the prejudices of her father and step-mother, and though she concealed her strong aversion against being presented at Court from her grandmother, she was at no pains to disguise her feelings from the other members of the household.

It is improbable that the Emperor ever thought of marrying his niece, and besides, it is

quite certain that he intended to bring about a union between her and the Prince of Asturias.

But Charlotte disliked every one of the matrimonial plans that were being laid for her, and her letters home were filled with complaints of her grandmother, and strong ill-advised comments upon nearly every member of the Imperial family. Her father insisted upon her return, and would have fetched her immediately, if Letitia, who still clung to the hope of a better understanding between her sons, had not expressed the wish to keep her a little longer. She wrote to Lucien, April 1st, 1810:

"My dear Son,

Although I have commissioned Charlotte to give you a full verbal report of my views on your affairs, I will add by letter that, if you care for me, you will not delay to accept the proposition made to you by the Emperor, from which he will never swerve. The welfare of yourself and your family, in fact of me and each one of us, depends upon you. There is not time to argue, my dear son, and nothing that you could bring forward would alter my opinion; I simply look for this last proof of the love you have always shown me. You will hear from Campi that I am ill in bed, and your last letter has contributed not a little to unnerve me. Your persistent obstinacy will inevitably shorten my days, and yet it is in your

power to give me life and happiness ; but this is the last time that I shall plead with you. The Emperor and his family are at Compiègne, Charlotte and I are alone in Paris, where your daughter continues to gain the love and esteem of those about her, to my great satisfaction. She is my companion, and there is but one thing wanting to render us both happy, your complete reconciliation with the Emperor.

Farewell, my dear son. I await your reply with intense impatience, or, I would like to say, the announcement of your arrival here. I heartily embrace you and your family.

YOUR DEVOTED MOTHER."

But even this last appeal was powerless to shake Lucien in his irrevocable resolve. It was evident too that his daughter had no such burning longing for a better understanding between her father and her powerful uncle as Letitia seemed to imagine, and the girl continued to write most disrespectful accounts of her experiences under the roof of her grandmother.

Her letters were opened by the spies of Napoleon, who was informed of her injudicious, sometimes malicious, expressions about himself, his brothers and sisters, and even Madame.

Although Napoleon did not always behave with becoming deference to his mother, he became very angry when he heard that anybody else

failed in respect, and Charlotte's ingratitude towards her grandmother offended him far more deeply than her contemptuous words about himself. He expressed his displeasure against his rebellious niece in severe terms, and commanded that she should be sent back to her father as quickly as possible.

CHAPTER XIX.

Napoleon's marriage with Marie Louise—Behaviour of the new Empress towards her Mother-in-law.

In view of his contemplated second marriage, the Emperor summoned a large family council January 28th, 1810, and announced to them that his choice of an Empress lay between a Princess of Russia, Austria, Saxony, and other reigning houses of Germany, or a French lady, and invited those present to express their opinions.

No one was in favour of a French lady, and the religion of a Russian was against her; the majority therefore voted for an alliance with the Imperial house of Austria, which met with the warm approval of Eugène Beauharnais, who maintained that something ought to be done to promote a more amicable understanding with that Empire. Joachim Murat, on the other hand, recalled the revolutionary memories attached to Marie Antoinette, and argued strongly against a

union with the house of Habsburg - Lorraine, which had never been propitious to France.

Overtures were made to Russia, but as one difficulty after another arose, the Emperor's private wishes tended more and more towards a marriage with the Archduchess Marie Louise. The Austrian Ambassador in Paris was made acquainted with his plans, and as early as the beginning of February, the French Court looked upon the step as almost determined.

Since the withdrawal of Josephine, Letitia had fulfilled the duties of hostess at her son's Court, and on February 9th the Austrian Ambassador dined with her, together with the King of Holland, when both mother and son expressed their sympathy with the approaching alliance, and on the 26th Napoleon sent a circular letter to his family, in which he announced his marriage. The capital was besieged with foreigners, and nearly every day accounts were published in the newspapers of the advent of some distinguished guest. Prince Camillo Borghèse arrived March 14th, King Jerome of Westphalia the 16th, and Elisa Baciocchi the 18th.

The first meeting between Napoleon and the Archduchess was to take place in the wood between Soissons and Compiègne, where Marie Antoinette had first seen her future husband (May, 1770). But in his eagerness to make the acquaintance of his *fiancèe*, Napoleon had ridden

further towards her than strict etiquette required, and while the horses of the Archduchess and her suite were being changed at Courcelles, Napoleon suddenly appeared upon the scene, to the surprise and consternation of Marie Louise.

Nearly every inhabitant that could stir rushed into the streets, when he and his future bride entered Compiègne at ten o'clock at night of March 27th, in a perfect deluge of rain, while the members of the Imperial house, with Letitia at their head, stood at the foot of the castle stairs to welcome them. The wedding was to take place April 2nd, and a few days previously all the daughters and daughters-in-law were invited to meet Marie Louise at a reception in their mother's house.

The Emperor had forced his sisters and sisters-in-law to bear the train of Josephine at her coronation, and he required them to render the like service to his second wife. It is true that this time it was an Austrian archduchess whose ermine mantle was to rest in their hands, but the Bonaparte ladies were occupying very different positions now than in 1796, and they were unanimous in their indignant protest against the command which they discussed with angry vehemence in the salons of Madame.

We know that Letitia had personally no liking for the requirements of monarchical etiquette, but on this occasion she felt it her duty to uphold her

son, and severely reprimanded the ladies before her. "My daughters and daughters-in-law, remember that the Emperor is accustomed to be obeyed. He may be wrong in this case, but if he persists in his demand, you are bound to do as he bids you." Her son entered the room at this very moment, and heard her concluding words. He guessed the subject that had called them forth, and kissed her warmly to show his gratitude. But the very next minute he addressed his sisters and the other ladies in such a stentorian voice of anger that they were instantly reduced to silence and submission. The civil ceremony took place at St. Cloud, April 1st, when the Emperor and his bride occupied thrones, and the princes and princesses ranged themselves on either side. Letitia stood to the right of Napoleon, and below her the reigning kings; to the left were the queens and princesses, headed by Queen Julie of Spain.

The sacred ceremony was performed the following day in the large square hall of the Louvre, which was only used on very rare, solemn occasions. This time, Letitia stood by the side of Marie Louise at the head of the Queens, with Louis, King of Holland, and the other Kings opposite to her.

The relationship between Marie Louise and Letitia was apparently, at all events, of a much more cordial nature than it had been between the

Empress Josephine and her mother-in-law. In spite of her feeble intellect, the Austrian Archduchess had the delicacy of feeling belonging to her race to understand the duty of treating the Emperor's mother with respect; but many little circumstances prove that she was really attached to Letitia, and in a letter to her father she writes:

"My mother-in-law is an amiable and estimable princess, and welcomed me most kindly."

The attraction was hardly mutual, for in spite of her devotion, and her protestations of filial attachment expressed both verbally and in her letters, Madame Mère had little sympathy with Marie Louise, whom she speaks of in her *Mémoires* as a weak, insignificant character. Her son was hurt at his mother's want of confidence in his wife, but a day came when he too recognised the justice of her conclusions.

The power of the Emperor of France, and the high descent of Marie Louise, never for one moment caused Letitia to forget that she was Napoleon's mother, and possessed a clear claim to respect from himself and his wife. At a family meeting one day, he stretched out his hand with a movement which seemed to imply that she ought to kiss it, but she pushed it away.

"Am I not your Emperor?" he asked.

"Am I not your mother?" she replied, "and are you not first and foremost my son?" Napoleon was silenced and kissed her hand. Marie Louise,

who was present, observed to her mother-in-law: "Mamma! When I was in Vienna I always kissed the hand of the Emperor of Austria."

"The Emperor of Austria is your father, my child!" answered Letitia; "the Emperor of France is my son—that is the difference!"

In spite of her retiring, almost anxious manners, she always exacted respect, and was punctilious about the rights inherent to her rank.

Marie Louise went to see her one day, in the absence of the Emperor, and observed:

"Madame, I should like to dine with you to-day, but do not inconvenience yourself on my account. I am not come as the Empress." Letitia put her arms round her, and kissed her on her cheek, as she replied:

"I shall not make the slightest difference on your account. I receive you as my daughter, and the Emperor's wife shall dine with the Emperor's mother!"

CHAPTER XX.

Napoleon and the King of Holland—Birth of the King of Rome.

THE Emperor's adjutant, Rapp, has left us the following eulogium on Napoleon: "No one was ever more faithful in his attachments than the Emperor. He tenderly loved his mother, was devoted to his wife, and thought highly of his brothers, sisters, and near relations; but with the exception of his mother, they all caused him sorrow, though he had loaded them with riches and honour."

His brother Joseph, at this time King of Spain, resembled his father in his love of dissipation, and never developed the vigorous activity that Napoleon expected from him. Jerome was just as contemptible as King of Westphalia, and hated by his subjects for his rapacity, profligacy, and exactions. Napoleon hoped that his family would uphold and strengthen his authority, but they proved worse than useless

to him, and he frequently complained to his mother about his brothers' incapacity.

"My son," Letitia would answer, "you are both right and wrong: right if you compare your brothers with yourself, for you are extraordinary, a unique personality, without an equal. But you are wrong to speak slightingly of them, if you compare them with other kings, for they are all stupid, and act as if they were blindfolded."

"Signora Letitia!" exclaimed the Emperor, "are you flattering me?"

"*I* flatter you? No, far from it! A mother never flatters her child. You know," she added, "that in the presence of others I treat you with respect, because I am your subject, but in the family circle I am your mother, and if you say 'I will,' I do not hesitate to rejoin 'I will not!'"

There were similar causes of strife between the King of Holland and the Emperor, which called for the mother's constant efforts to smooth or dissipate. Louis had been received with great coolness by the Dutch, though he gradually became by far the most popular of the Bonaparte Kings. He had the welfare of his subjects at heart, and tried to protect them against the exactions of Napoleon.

The mutual dislike of Louis and his wife had developed into open rupture, and the frivolous, unprincipled Hortense did not scruple to ridicule her husband's melancholy and sensitiveness.

Her high spirits, passionate devotion to amusement, and injudicious language had been in daily antagonism with his seriousness, morbid suspicion, and nervous care for his health. She had left Amsterdam, and was residing in the French capital, though whenever her husband had to be in Paris he never went to his own house, which was occupied by his wife, but stayed with his mother. Louis considered himself a Dutchman, though his imperious brother ordered him to behave as a French official. He summoned him to Paris shortly before the arrival of Marie Louise, when the meeting between them was far from cordial. Napoleon is said to have remarked :

"Louis caused me far more inconvenience by his apparent virtues than Lucien by his faults." He was annoyed at the independence which he dared to exercise in governing his kingdom, and threatened to reduce Holland to the condition of a French province. The young King was alternately anxious or animated with a fatalistic courage, and as he suspected that the Emperor might detain him as a prisoner until he yielded, he resolved to hasten back to Holland in all secrecy. But on his return to his mother after an interview in the Tuileries, he found her hotel surrounded with gendarmes, who had orders not to lose sight of him.

The unfortunate king became seriously ill in

his mother's house, and all the royal personages then in Paris hastened to inquire after him. Napoleon stayed away at first, though when he at last resolved to see his brother, the interview proved a friendly one. As he had sufficiently recovered, he went to Compiègne with his mother, in order to receive Marie Louise, and was present at all the fêtes on the occasion of her marriage. He finally returned to Amsterdam, though not before he had been compelled to yield to the requirements of the Emperor, who at the same time insisted that Hortense should accompany her husband. But the old want of unity soon made itself felt between them, and Hortense left again for France, taking her youngest child with her.

The political situation was as complicated as before, for Napoleon was pertinacious in regarding Holland as entirely dependent upon him, though nominally a kingdom; and Louis, "too weak to make any effectual resistance," resolved to abdicate, and left his capital secretly the night of July 2nd, 1810. It was not known at first where he was, and Letitia became a prey to the most intense anxiety about her son. It was not till after the lapse of nearly three weeks that she received the following letter from the Emperor:

"St. Cloud, July 20th, 1810.

Madame!

I hasten to inform you that the King of Holland is residing at Töplitz, in Bavaria. As

his disappearance must have given you just grounds for great uneasiness, I do not delay a moment to send you these reassuring tidings. Ill-health can be the only possible explanation for his strange behaviour.

Your sincerely devoted son,

NAPOLEON."

* * * *

The report that the Imperial pair might hope to have an heir, and the universal joy when the approaching confinement of Marie Louise was announced, caused a momentary lull in these family disagreements.

A special edition of the *Moniteur*, in the evening of March 19th, 1811, had prepared the Parisians by publishing the fact that the Empress was beginning to feel the pangs of labour, while the big bells of Notre Dame summoned the faithful to pray on her behalf. The sun rose brightly the following morning, to find the city given over to eager expectancy, and every street filled with crowds eager to catch the first sign of the birth of a child, though the cannon had as yet uttered no sound. The Imperial family, officials of the highest rank, and the ladies and gentlemen of the court, had passed the whole night at the Tuileries. The Duchess of Montebello, chief lady-in-waiting, was in the bedroom of the Empress, holding the sufferer's head with both hands. Madame Letitia and her daughters

were in an adjoining apartment, together with the Emperor, who paced the floor in nervous anxiety. It was not till ten o'clock that the Empress was freed from her anguish. Then carriages were heard rattling away in every direction, the air became alive with movement and expectation of the first gun, while the vast multitudes sank into deep silence, as if actuated by some magic spell, and foot passengers, elegant equipages, and workmen's barrows stood still, or if a single vehicle attempted to move forward, threatening voices and commanding gestures forced the driver to remain rooted to the spot. Domestics appeared at every doorway, tradesmen stood at the entrance of their shops, and the windows of every house on every storey were crowded with heads. Then the counting of every gun began, and the successive numbers were repeated in chorus, till some uncertainty seemed to prevail, followed by violent contradictory statements, as to whether a certain report was the nineteenth or twentieth. But when one more was heard, all doubts disappeared, and a deafening, mighty shout of "Vive l'Empereur" overpowered every other sound.

The cannon continued to reverberate through the air, but nobody heeded their roar, or cared to count twenty-four or twenty-five ; the people had got their wish, a prince had been born to them. Then came the reaction from quiet and silence,

and all was life and movement. Carriages rolled onwards to their destination with redoubled speed, men embraced each other, shook hands, and tossed their hats into the air, while the women waved their handkerchiefs like flags, and wept with joy in the streets, cheered on by the shrieking, gesticulating masses at the windows.

Napoleon contemplated his people's enthusiasm behind a curtain at one of the windows of the palace, while big tears chased each other down his cheeks, apparently unheeded. He had reached the highest point of his desires, and the certainty of this fact may have crept into his soul; his eyes were wet with tears all through the day, and he showed himself even more serious and thoughtful than usual. Pages were sent here and there to communicate the glad tidings, and already, at half-past ten, the aeronaut, Madame Blanchard, ascended in a balloon to scatter printed notices of the birth of the child, called the King of Rome even from his cradle. The Emperor wrote personally to every friendly Court, and exclaimed: "These are good letters, I never signed better."

His enemies, high and low, in the east or in the west, were filled with jealousy at this new favour that had fallen into his lap, for the birth of an Imperial child must enhance his position, his influence, and his consideration. Nobody dared to imagine, much less to express, the possibility

that his might and splendour could suddenly crumble away, and the political circles of Vienna were startled by the audacious shouts of a *gamin*:

"Wait a few years, and we shall have this King of Rome a begging student in our midst."

The event was celebrated all over the immense French Empire and the Kingdom of Italy by popular fetes, salvoes of artillery, jubilant peals, thanksgiving services in the churches, illuminations and fireworks, as well as by flags and pennons that floated from public and private buildings, church towers, and masts.

Poetry degraded itself by fulsome flattery, and songs, odes, and ditties were printed in every European language, except English. In the course of a week there were at least two thousand poems in honour of the little King of Rome, and one hundred thousand francs were distributed among such writers as were needy. But even the most exaggerated of these versified effusions were but an echo of the unanimous national feeling.

The Emperor's mother was deeply touched by the overflowing delight and enthusiasm kindled at the birth of her grandchild, and the countless proofs of admiration for her son, coupled with personal devotion.

The jubilant signs of satisfaction were repeated at the child's baptism, when people swarmed to the capital from far distant corners of the Empire to express their extravagant enthusiasm.

The Emperor of Austria, represented by one of the archdukes, and Madame Mere were the sponsors, and as Letitia turned to look at her powerful son during the sacred ceremony, and caught his gaze full of indescribable happiness fixed upon the child, it seemed as though at last confidence in the future might inspire her too. But this tardy sense of security was soon to be dispelled.

CHAPTER XXI.

Catherine of Westphalia and her Mother-in-law—Letitia during the decline of the Empire.

LETITIA'S best-loved daughter-in-law was Jerome's second wife, who had been attracted to Madame Mère the first time that she saw her, and never wavered in her loyal devotion and respect towards her husband's mother. In one of her letters she compares her with the Dowager Empress of Russia, who was universally esteemed. Letitia was always happy in the society of the King and Queen of Westphalia, either in Paris or during her visits to watering-places, when they always contrived to see her frequently. In the summer of 1811, she went to stay with her children at Cassel, where she was received by the municipal authorities and accorded quite a triumphant entry into the capital of her youngest son, who, with his wife, did his utmost to render his mother's visit as agreeable as possible. Banquets were

given and excursions arranged to neighbouring castles, as well as reviews and hunting parties. But the unanimity and devotion that existed between the royal couple caused her far deeper joy than any festivity, and when Jerome and Catherine had accompanied her a short distance on her return journey, they were all three deeply moved on parting. The queen wrote in her diary :

"The leave-taking was very painful to me, and considering the age of our mother, and the agitating times in which we live, it is difficult to foresee when we shall meet again. Her genial companionship has been precious to me, she is clever and possessed of many excellent qualities, and as I am forced to rely upon myself under most circumstances, it was refreshing to feel the strong support she can give. The heart of a woman craves for intercourse with her own sex."

The following year she wrote to her mother-in-law :—

"Cassel, April 28th, 1812.

My dear Mamma,

I was especially pleased to receive your letter of the 16th, as I had become seriously uneasy and anxious that I had not heard for so long. You have spoilt me by your goodness, and if a longer time than usual elapses without news from you, I am haunted by all sorts of apprehensions, either that you are not well, or

that your feelings towards me are less warm than they were. You know, dear Mamma, that I love you as if I were really one of your own children, and this very devotion makes me long to be loved by you in return. I heartily share in the anxiety that you are feeling at this time, for I shall never rest till Jerome returns, though he is well, and writes to me frequently. Just now he is at Kalisz, in Poland, and if you would like to write to him, you have only to enclose your letter to me, as I have regular opportunities of sending to him, and in fact I write most days. Business matters which he has left in my hands require almost daily correspondence, and besides, I do not care to take too much responsibility upon myself. I am rejoiced to have such good accounts of your health, and earnestly beg you always to let me know how you feel, and what plans you are making for the summer.

Remember me kindly to the Emperor and Empress, when it is convenient, and give my best love to Caroline and Pauline.

Rest assured that nothing can equal the tender and respectful devotion entertained towards you by

Your sincerely attached daughter,

CATHERINE."

In the meantime serious preparations had been quietly set on foot in Paris for the campaign

against Russia, while the Emperor, accompanied by Marie Louise, was sunning himself once again in the full glory of his power and splendour at Dresden, where the allied princes swore allegiance to him, June, 1812, before he set out at the head of his colossal army, to which all tributary states, even Austria and Prussia, had contributed their contingents.

A few months later grievous accounts of the sufferings of the troops and their bloody defeats arrived in France, where a conspiracy against Napoleon's government, headed by General Mallet, which had nearly succeeded, struck terror into the hearts of the Imperial family. The news from Russia became daily more alarming, and universal panic prevailed. There was hardly a family that had not to mourn a relative who had met his death on the battle-field, or in "the dark half-frozen stream" of the Beresina.

The Emperor reached Paris in good health, quite unexpectedly, late at night, December 18th, and lost no time in transferring the whole country into one vast camp, and restoring hope and confidence to the stricken nation by the mere force of his own indomitable energy.

After the hostile behaviour towards the Pope and subjection of the States of the Church to France, Lucien Bonaparte no longer felt himself secure in Italy, and contemplated seeking a home

in America with his family, but he did not get further than England, where he was hospitably received, and "permitted to purchase a beautiful estate about fifteen miles from Ludlow," though he was strictly watched by the English Government, who forbade him to leave the country. When his brother entered on his great campaign against Germany in 1813, Lucien forgot all his former resentment against him, and wrote to place himself at his disposal, on which occasion the Emperor wrote the following lines to his mother: "Lucien has written to propose a reconciliation, which I myself heartily desire. Write to him in my name, and tell him that his letter has found a warm response in my heart. He shall have the throne of Tuscany, rule in Florence, restore the flourishing period of the Medici, and, like them, be a lover and patron of the fine arts."

Letitia wept for joy as she perused this letter, when, after ten years' waiting, she could at last grasp the fact of a termination to the strife which had caused her so many hours of bitter sorrow.

And Louis, too, was meditating a return to the Emperor from his quiet retreat at Gratz, in Styria, where he had been living since his abdication of the throne of Holland. He felt as he read the news of the defeat of the French army in Russia that his place ought to be at his brother's side, and with this conviction he

expressed himself ready to serve under the Imperial banner.

"I am coming, Sire," he wrote to Napoleon, January 1st, 1813, "to offer to my country, to you and my family, what remains of my shattered health, as well as any service that I am able to render, provided it is compatible with my honour."

He meant to imply by this last remark that he felt himself first and foremost a Dutchman, and that the Emperor ought to restore independence to his former subjects, and proclaim the fact to the world at large.

The Emperor replied, but not in the strain that his brother expected, and Louis found that he had made a serious mistake in his conjecture that the loss of an army had been sufficient to daunt the iron character of Napoleon, who believed himself still powerful enough to crush his enemies, and felt not the slightest inclination to comply with the wishes of his fugitive brother. We seem to hear in his reply the scornful ridicule with which he received the offer of the royal enthusiast: "Your observations with reference to my position are erroneous. I have more than a million armed men at my disposal, and two hundred million francs to my credit. Holland shall continue to be French." But in order to soften this peremptory language, which would blight all Louis' illusions, he praised his decision

to return to France, and promised to receive him into his dominions, "not as a brother by whom he had been offended, but as a father who had brought him up." At the same time he begged his mother to write to the ex-king of Holland, whom she addressed as follows :—

"Paris, February 20th, 1813.

My dear Son,

The Emperor has given me your letters of the 1st and 2nd of January, together with the one which you sent him to my address. I cannot tell you what pleasure they have caused me, and I heartily thank God, who has guided you to take this step under present circumstances. It does credit alike to your heart and your judgment, and would make me love you even more tenderly than I do, if such a thing were possible. But it is not enough, my dear son, to have taken a first step; there must be no hesitation, the work must be completed. The Emperor read me the reply which he sent you, and except for the passages about Holland, it seems to me that you ought to be satisfied. He concludes with an earnest appeal to you to join him in Paris, which I cordially endorse, and beg that you will not refuse his invitation a second time. I entreat you in the name of all that are dearest to you, and as the strongest proof that you can show of your devotion to myself. If needs be, I command

you as your mother! If I dared commit to paper all the weighty reasons which summon you to Paris, I am certain that you would not hesitate for one moment to return from exile; but it is enough if I tell you that your presence here is essential, much more so than you can conceive at a distance. Reject every plea that has hitherto withheld you from us, listen to the voice of nature, and return to your family, who long to welcome you. Circumstances could not possibly be more favourable for you, and your arrival at this crisis will cause as much admiration in Europe as your firm decision three years ago, and public opinion cannot fail to applaud your noble conduct. And besides, what a comfort it will be to you to see your children again, to watch over the education of your little Napoleon, who is a lovable interesting child, and already the centre of countless hopes. I do not doubt that you will forget the past in his presence. I will not repeat what I have said thousands of times with reference to myself; you will bring peace and rest to my heart, if you will only come. If you refuse, you may have to reproach yourself with having shortened the sorrowful remainder of my days, and with having caused me to descend into the grave without a regret. My health is fairly good, and Pauline sends me word that she is beginning to improve. Your uncle is still at Lyons and quite well; you hear direct from the

Queen of Spain. The Emperor, Empress, and King of Rome are in good health. Your brother has forgotten to give me your poems; I will ask him for them, and criticise them in my next letter.

Farewell, my dear son. Do not keep me waiting for a reply, and let it be in accordance with the wishes of my heart. I embrace you tenderly.

YOUR LOVING MOTHER."

The Emperor's reply to Louis' communication was not calculated to promote a reconciliation, and his declaration that Holland should continue French painfully affected the ex-King. "I would rather die a thousand deaths," he said, "than do anything in defiance of my conscience and my duty."

His mother's praise with reference to his decision to return sounded like mockery in his ears, and it cut him to the heart that she should argue that he ought to be content with his brother's reply, while in his wrath he overlooked the exhortation to rejoin his family. The warlike preparations he had seen in Austria were a clear indication to him that the Emperor's father-in-law was intent on an attack upon France, and his own position became intolerable in a State which, with the combined assistance of the rest of Europe, was determined to crush his fatherland. He left Gratz, August 2nd, under an assumed

name, and sent word to Napoleon that he was going to Switzerland. Once again he offered him his services, in the hope that his brother would grant his demands with reference to Holland. But the Emperor was simply exasperated by the admonitions to pursue a peaceful policy which Louis allowed himself to express, and declared that Holland should neither revert to the House of Orange nor to his brother. In an incredibly short space of time he had led his army into Germany to oppose the advancing enemy, and in May, 1813, he won the battles of Lutzen and Bautzen, which only tended to increase his undaunted self-confidence. On the occasion of the second of these victories, Marie Louise wrote to her mother-in-law :—

"St. Cloud, May 25th, 1813, 7 p.m.
My dear Mamma,

I have just received the news that the Emperor has won a battle at Bautzen, and that he is well and was never in danger. I hope that this and the previous success will secure peace and the return of the Emperor. I have a good many things to say to you, but I will not defer one minute to rejoice your heart with these good tidings. Rest assured of my warm love for you, dear mamma, and believe me,

Your very devoted daughter,

LOUISE."

Letitia was at the watering-place Pont when she received this letter, and returned to Paris about a month later. A lady of some position, who came to her about this time with a letter of introduction, has described the interview in her *Memoires*:

"I found Madame seated at a large table with over thirty little baskets and different kinds of bead-work in front of her.

"'Wait a moment,' she said, 'we will look at the letter directly. Can you do this sort of work?'

"'No, Madame.'

"'Neither can I. I buy them from the unfortunate widows of our fallen officers, of whom there are so many.' (To her gentleman-in-waiting): 'You remember, Cossé, that crippled lady who worked them with her fairy-like fingers. I am doing a kindness to the poor thing; all my ladies will take them. Don't you think so?'

"'Certainly, most willingly! A gift from the hand of Madame Mère must always be acceptable.'

"Letitia: 'A gift, did you say? What are you thinking of? I pay for them, but I make the others pay too. Alas! my dear, it is very evident that you are not economical.'"

The same lady writes further:

"I had difficulty in restraining my laughter, but Monsieur Cossé-Brisac's intense gravity recalled me at once to a respectful attitude.

"Among other points, Madame questioned me about Roman beads, and I flattered myself that I was making a diplomatic reply:

"'They are much dearer than those used for this kind of work.'

"'Ah, my young friend, I know the price of every variety,' exclaimed Madame. 'I am not easily imposed upon, but I do not play the princess like my daughters. By the way, is there any news to-day? Cossé seems so depressed, it makes me quite uneasy. Every one says that my son ought to have made peace, but I for my part believe that whatever he does is for the best.'

"I felt rather perplexed, and rejoined that we must trust in the genius of the Emperor.

"Madame made a movement of the head, and I hastened to take my leave, being escorted out of her presence with the same etiquette as before; but as I was withdrawing, with my face towards Madame, my foot became entangled in my train, and if I had not been slim and elastic I must inevitably have fallen.

"The Emperor's mother showed on this occasion that though she was by no means unfamiliar with Court usages, she had at least retained her frank, unassuming manners and her genuine goodness of heart.

"'Go straight forward,' she exclaimed; 'etiquette had well nigh brought you to the ground.'"

CHAPTER XXII.

Letter from Jerome to his Mother—Letitia reconciles Joseph with Napoleon—Fall of the Empire—Departure to Blois—Letitia leaves for Rome.

JEROME wrote from Cassel to his mother, September 18th, 1813:

"My dear Mother,

I gave an order some three months ago for an enamel casket to be painted for you, which is not yet finished. I hope that it will prove satisfactory, and that you will accept it as a proof of my devotion to the best and most beloved of mothers.

We are in hourly expectation of important news from our troops about Berlin; they seem to be resting in Bohemia, and the Emperor must be at Torgau. God grant us peace is the longing wish of the whole world. Farewell, dear mother I embrace you heartily.

Your devoted loving son,

JEROME."

This desire for peace was not destined to be

fulfilled. Austria had allied herself with Russia and Prussia, the King of Bavaria had seceded from Napoleon, and King Jerome had to flee from his kingdom, which again reverted to its former ruler. After the decisive battle of Leipsic, "the confederation of the Rhine was dissolved for ever, and the Princes who adhered to that league" sought to save their possessions by withdrawing from their former protector. But these were not the only results of Napoleon's defeat: Holland revolted against the oppressor, and joyfully received the long-exiled Stadtholder, William of Orange, returning in triumph from England; Switzerland made herself independent, and Illyria again submitted to Austria.

The sovereigns whom Napoleon had created were mainly instrumental in bringing about his downfall, especially the King of Westphalia, whose influence had created him many enemies. The Emperor forbade him to return to Paris, and Jerome, who could not reconcile himself to the loss of Westphalia, wandered with the pitiful remnant of his Court from Coblentz to Cologne, from Cologne to Aix-la-Chapelle.

Wellington's victories in Spain had compelled Joseph to withdraw from that kingdom. He returned to France as an "innocent victim," and never ceased to torment his brother to raise fresh troops, by means of which he could regain his throne. But it was too late. Napoleon had to

think of protecting his own frontiers against the allied powers who were rapidly pushing forwards, and insisted that Joseph must formally renounce the Spanish throne and live as a French prince. But the ex-King was unwilling to submit, and instead of supporting the Emperor by placing himself at the head of the defence of Paris, he held himself aloof in proud resentment and disapproved of his brother's tactics. He lived on his estate at Mortefontaine, surrounded by a small Court, to which Comte Miot de Melito thus refers :

"It was a singular group brought together in this castle : a King of Spain who did not possess an inch of that land, and the wife of a French general now promoted to be a reigning sovereign and become our bitterest foe ; * one of Napoleon's sisters-in-law, daughter of the King of Würtemberg, who had joined the alliance formed to overturn the Empire, and Spanish, German, and French courtiers, who were practically homeless ; while, to crown the medley, were to be seen an Indian patriarch and the Grand Inquisitor of Spain, who occasionally said mass in the Castle. Hunting, fishing, gambling, excursions, and the pleasures of the table were the ties that bound this strange assembly, who wondered to find themselves together, living in a kind of stupor, and waiting for the storm, whose distant rumblings

* Bernadotte.

were aubible even here, to break loose in all its fury and scatter them one from another."

The situation of France became more precarious each day, and the Emperor's main support rested on the hope that his eldest brother would submit to the position of a French prince. As in every family dispute, so on this occasion, it was the mother who acted as mediator by going to Mortefontaine, December 27th, and urgently entreating Joseph to write to Napoleon, which he did as follows, two days after Letitia's visit:

"Sire,

The approach of foreign troops from the Swiss frontier has exposed France to the enemy, and I trust that, under these circumstances, your Majesty will feel convinced that my sentiments are sincerely French. I should esteem myself fortunate to be allowed to serve you, and beg you to believe that I am prepared to prove my devotion."

The reconciliation of the brothers was complete, and in January, 1814, the ex-King of Spain took up his residence in the Luxembourg, which he had occupied eight years previously as a French prince. As the allied troops had invaded Switzerland, Louis Bonaparte was compelled to leave Solothurn, where he had been residing for some time. He first went to his uncle, Cardinal Fesch, who was in residence as

Archbishop of Lyons; but in the early part of 1814 he left for Paris, where he lived with his mother. Napoleon was angry that he had dared to come without asking his permission, and ordered him to withdraw to a distance of forty miles from the capital. The younger brother refused to obey, saying: "Nobody has the right to forbid me to live in my own home."

Marie Louise interceded for a meeting with the Emperor, January 10th, but the interview was short and cold. Events succeeded each other with alarming rapidity, and the power of the Emperor seemed annihilated, while present dangers and future fears effaced all recollection of former grandeur.

Letitia was now passing through those days of misfortune which she had foreseen and dreaded for so long, while hatred, persecution, and slander were assailing her once powerful son, whose name was fast losing its terror. Signs of weariness and laxity became more and more apparent in France, and the enthusiasm with which the people had taken up arms against Europe in the days of the Revolution was gone. Persistent courage can only be kept alive by hope, and there was none; even officers in high command had lost their martial ardour. They had no further liking for a life of adventure, and spoke openly of the hopelessness of the situation, except in the immediate presence of the Emperor. His most

devoted adherents were those who had the greatest cause for complaint. Veterans who, without a murmur, had followed him on the sands of Egypt and in the snows of Russia, from one campaign to another, from Arcole and the Pyramids to Moscow and Leipsic; who, though scarred and wounded, had often had but the shelter of a straw hut, yet honoured him in the day of his defeat, and never lost a spark of their fidelity or enthusiasm.

The news of the rapid approach of the enemy acted as a lightning flash on the pleasure-loving Parisians, who for the first time realised the stern reality that the war which had hitherto been waged abroad was becoming a factor in their very lives, and that every town, every hamlet, and every home might be seized and plundered. The Emperor had met with such violent rancorous opposition on the opening of the Legislative Assembly in December, 1813, that he had judged it prudent to dissolve it at once.

"I know," he said, "that people are pleased to call me the cannibal from Corsica, and heap every possible indignity upon me, but they will say yet worse things, and I will restrain my wrath until they maintain that I have breakfasted upon my own mother."

At the very moment when his brothers had resolved to share his fate, he received news that his brother-in-law Murat had signed an armistice

with England, and entered into an alliance with Austria. Both his mother and he felt the desertion all the more keenly that it was owing to his wife's influence that the King of Naples had allowed himself to be betrayed into this treachery, in consequence of which Letitia lost the little faith she had ever had in her son-in-law, and all confidence in her youngest daughter.

On January 14th, 1814, Napoleon took leave of his wife and son, whom he was never to see again, and hastened to the front. Marie Louise was appointed Regent, with Joseph as her chief adviser, assisted by a Council in which the Emperor had included his mother, the Queen of Spain, and Queen Hortense.

Two months later the allied troops stood before Paris, and Napoleon, who was hurrying to the relief of his capital, arrived too late, for the very night on which he was expected, the inhabitants submitted to the generosity of the conquerors, while the Emperor, filled with resentment and despair, had to seek refuge in Fontainebleau.

The Empress, accompanied by the King of Rome, Letitia, and the whole of the Imperial family, had left Paris for Blois before the arrival of the enemy. The road between Vendôme and Blois was unfinished, and torrents of rain had made it almost impassable in several places; baggage waggons stuck fast in the mud, from

which they were extricated with difficulty by the help of horses taken from other vehicles, and even the magnificent coronation coach had been dragged with them, to retard their progress by constantly sinking deep into the slimy morass. The little town was reached about five o'clock in the afternoon of April 2nd, where the travellers were received without one word to break the oppressive silence. The inhabitants were naturally overwhelmed with surprise at the advent of so many distinguished guests, and the Town Hall was hastily turned into a residence for the Empress and her son, while the well-to-do citizens living in the immediate neighbourhood were required to furnish accommodation for Madame Mère, the Kings Joseph, Louis, and Jerome, and the Queens Julie and Hortense.

The most painful uncertainty prevailed respecting the fate of the capital, even of France herself, and during the forenoon of April 7th news was received that Napoleon had abdicated and that Marie Louise was recalled to Austria by her father. The King of Rome was to accompany her, and as Letitia clasped her son's child in her arms for the last time, her daughter-in-law said, just before taking her seat in the carriage: "Madame, I hope you will always retain the feelings of good-will with which you have hitherto honoured me."

"That will depend upon yourself, and your

conduct in the future," was the rejoinder of the Emperor's afflicted mother.

Marie Louise was weak in will and character, and the imperative message of her father, combined with the advice of her Council, led her to return to the home of her childhood. If she had been guided otherwise, it is not improbable that posterity would have seen in her the faithful helpmate of the Emperor. She craved for some one near her whom she could love, and if she had hastened from Blois to Fontainebleau, it is possible that the prisoner of St. Helena would have been comforted by her devotion to the last. She left on Easter Eve, 1814, and the same day Letitia, accompanied by her eldest and youngest sons, set out for Orleans. The route was lined with serried rows of spectators who contented themselves with gazing in the deepest silence on her and the two ex-Kings. Her lady-in-waiting, Baroness Fontanges, had been with her in Blois, but resigned her duties in Orleans, where her example was followed by all the other ladies of the court.

Cardinal Fesch was awaiting his sister in the town, and the two quietly pursued their journey to Italy, while they realised even more vividly than ever how close was the intimacy that bound them to each other. "Madame Mère" had spent the ten years of the Empire in constant fear for the life of Napoleon, in

intercession and mediation for her other sons, in sorrow on account of her daughters' behaviour, in jealousy of Josephine, and watchfulness against the slights of Marie Louise. She was the only member of the family who was not unprepared for the fall of the Empire, and had grasped the emptiness of worldly greatness, even in the midst of its enjoyment. She had met with so many singular reverses and surprises that she was sometimes tempted to ask herself if her life had been a romance or a reality, and as she travelled, she recalled without a regret the sycophants and courtiers who had behaved like priests in the presence of their deity when Napoleon was by, but who had hastily turned their back when fate had hurled him from his pedestal. He, who but a few years previously, as conqueror at Wagram, had organised the most brilliant fêtes at Fontainebleau, was now sitting vanquished and alone in the same castle, where the Pope had been his prisoner. His Holiness was free, and had recently celebrated his triumphal return to Rome, where he generously offered an asylum to the exiled family of his persecutor, for it was in his States that Fesch and Letitia looked for protection. Pius VII. received the Emperor's mother with gentle benevolence, as he said:

"Welcome, my daughter, welcome to this city, which has always proved a refuge for the fugitive."

CHAPTER XXIII.

Letitia and the Emperor in Elba.

NAPOLEON had anchored off Elba the evening of May 3rd, and landed the following morning. After hearing a Te Deum in the church, he proceeded to the Town Hall, where he was to reside, the State apartment of which had been decorated with some small paintings and a few weapons, while a throne had been hastily arranged in the centre of the long wall, ornamented with gilt paper and strips of coloured cloth. Crowds had followed the Emperor, and many were unable to find standing room. He addressed those present and urged upon the mayors to maintain order, and the priests to exhort their parishioners to cultivate peace.

The next morning at five o'clock, he inspected the public buildings, and did not return till nine, after having astonished every islander whom he had met by the variety of his questions. He gave orders for innumerable alterations, amongst

others that the Saint-Francois barracks should be converted into a residence for himself.

One day he visited the mines at Rio at an equally early hour, examined the working of them most conscientiously, and praised the manager on leaving.

In a word, he evinced the same care and concern for this little island, twenty miles in circumference, with barely 12,000 inhabitants, as he had formerly done for his vast empire.

In order to gain the favour of the people, he granted 60,000 francs to be expended on the construction of roads, which had been planned, but abandoned for want of means, and he had the amount changed into silver coin, in order that his generosity might produce an imposing effect, as his servants carried the sacks of money through the town. The southern vehemence of the islanders seemed to break forth as in fiery flames towards their ruler, whose inexhaustible treasures, and the marvels that he was about to accomplish, formed their one theme. Never, in his most propitious moments of splendour, had he been more flattered than on the isle of Elba. He sent word to the ladies that he would be pleased to receive them twice a week at eight o'clock in the evening, and the flattering invitation was cordially accepted. Napoleon addressed them in turn, inquired their names, and the occupation of their husbands, to which the majority replied that they

were engaged in commerce. When the Emperor asked more particularly, he learned that one was a butcher, another a baker, and so on. He was intensely busy during the month of May arranging his residence, enclosing walks, and superintending his masons and carpenters, from five o'clock in the morning, wearing silk stockings and buckle shoes. General Bertrand, who was with him, wrote, May 27th, 1814, to Monsieur de Méneval, who had accompanied Marie Louise and was still with her:

"The Emperor is very happy on the island, and seems to have forgotten the very different position that he was recently occupying. He is eagerly arranging his home here, and making inquiries about a pretty residence in the country."

He wrote again, June 25th :—

"The Emperor's health is perfect. We are constantly riding, driving, or sailing; but he finds time to superintend the improvements in this house, and several others that are being got ready for him in different parts of the island."

As soon as his mother heard that he was in Elba, she resolved to join him, and so did her daughter Pauline, though the latter was unable to leave until a few months later on. Letitia started from Rome, July 31st; and a Scotchman, Colonel Campbell, who was also going to Elba, and travelled with her from Leghorn, mentions her in his diary as amiable, natural, and straightforward.

He wrote too :—

"The old lady was very good-looking, of middle height, with a most attractive expression. She was accompanied by her gentleman-in-waiting, Colonna, an old Corsican, who, hat in hand, offered her his arm each time that she moved from one part of the vessel to another. There were besides two ladies-in-waiting and her old servant, Madame Saveria."

The ship's officers, the Colonel, the Emperor's mother and her little suite, all took their meals together on deck. As they neared Elba, and one of the company exclaimed that Napoleon's house was in sight, Letitia, who was certainly well over sixty, jumped quickly and lightly on to a cannon in order to catch the first glimpse of her son's home. As soon as the vessel had anchored, the harbour-master and several other officers came on board with a message that the Emperor had expected his mother the whole of the previous day, but that he had left the town early that morning. These gentlemen were quickly followed by Generals Bertrand and Drouot, all the officers of the Imperial Guard, and the mayor, in order to receive Madame Mère on the landing-stage, from whence soldiers lined the way through every street leading up to her residence in Porto-Ferrajo. Two carriages, each with six horses, conducted her and her suite amid the enthusiastic greetings of the crowd. She did not see her son

till the following morning, when they visited together the principal points of interest on the island.

Her arrival had taken place August 2nd, and on the 15th, her son's birthday, she organised a magnificent fête, to the intense delight of the inhabitants. Among those who were presented to her on this occasion was a charming young girl, Rosa Mellini, daughter of an artillery officer, who, on his retirement from the army, had returned to his native island. She at once attracted the attention of Letitia, who later on selected her as her especial companion, treated her with the greatest kindness to the end of her life, and entrusted her with her entire correspondence. The Emperor's mother had no regrets during her stay in Elba, for she was in far closer relationship with her son than she had been at the ceremonious court of the Tuileries. She had a well-appointed house, which was afterwards shared by her daughter Pauline, and not a day passed that she did not visit her son, that he did not come to see her, or that she in some way was not able to give him loving proof of her devotion. She spent many of her morning hours in needlework, seated before a table covered with portraits of the Emperor and her other children.

She wrote to her son Lucien, September 16th :

"Now that my furniture has arrived from

Paris, I am living in the greatest comfort near Napoleon, who is continually thinking what he can do to perfect my residence in Porto-Ferrajo."

During the winter of 1814-15 her salons were constantly opened to the families of both citizens and officers, and she herself was much more frequently present at the festivities of the little town than she had been at those of the French capital. Letitia, in her dignified beauty, and the Princess Borghèse, bewitching in grace and loveliness, presided over the entertainments that Napoleon organised for the ladies of the island, and at the little theatre in Porto-Ferrajo, Napoleon, Madame Mère, and Pauline were constantly present at really good representations.

The Emperor's mother was very popular, although she was reproached with a too great partiality for Corsicans; but she was actuated by the faithfulness of all strong characters, which led her to favour any countryman who sought employment under her son.

"My mother is as admirable in her devotion to her birthplace, as she is in her love to her children," Napoleon used to say; "her love for me is sublime. She and Pauline will reconcile me to my life on this island for a long time to come, if I really needed consolation."

The time which the Emperor spent in Elba was on the whole far from unhappy, and the perfect rest was welcome after a troubled career.

The delicious air, the sea-view which he had loved from his childhood, the language, his mother's native tongue, the regiments of his old guard who had accompanied him, his servants, who in their romantic devotion were ready to shed the last drop of their blood for him—all had their attraction, and he felt like one enjoying a summer holiday, with a presentiment that his term of repose would soon be over.

Neither war nor honours had lost their charm for him, and he experienced a malicious pleasure in following the course of events in France. The errors of the Bourbons and the opinions of French newspapers caused him unmixed delight, and yet he was frequently heard to say that he would henceforth live the life of a J.P. in some English county, without a thought for worldly grandeur. But another day he would climb a hill in the vicinity of Porto-Ferrajo, and as he gazed upon the sea dashing in angry billows against the rocky coast, he could not refrain from exclaiming:

"One must confess that my island is very tiny."

His former minister, Talleyrand, wrote from the Congress at Vienna, October 13th, 1814, to Louis XVIII:

"The removal of Bonaparte from Elba is definitely hinted at. Nobody has expressed a clear opinion as to where he had better be sent, but I have suggested the Azores, which are 500 miles from the Continent."

The King of France considered this an excellent plan, and Talleyrand replied to him, December 7th :

"We must send this man away from Elba as quickly as possible."

The news reached the Emperor that they were planning his further removal from the French coast, and he begged again and again for the fulfilment of the promises entered into at the time of his abdication, but without even a reply. Louis XVIII. failed to send a single coin of the millions which were assigned to him, his expenses meanwhile having been defrayed from his mother's purse. But still more bitter was the persistent refusal to allow Marie Louise and his son to share in his exile. Disastrous as were the consequences of the Emperor's return from Elba to himself and others, it must be recognised that his treatment at the hands of the King of France and the allied sovereigns perfectly justified his self-defence. He was not only a general longing to be at the head of his troops again, a sovereign anxious to recover his crown and sceptre, but a husband and a father who would gain possession of his wife and child, a man who would fight for his personal liberty.

His arrangements were quickly made and he planned to leave the island, February 26th, 1815.

"One evening, during our residence in Porto-Ferrajo," Letitia relates, "the Emperor was in unusually high spirits, and invited Pauline and

me to a game of écarté, soon after which he withdrew to his private room, and as he did not return, I went to call him ; but his valet told me he had gone down to the garden. I remember that it was one of the warmest evenings of that spring, and the moon was shining through the trees, so that I could see the Emperor pacing up and down the walks. He suddenly stood still and leant against a fig-tree, when I heard him say : 'I must tell my mother that.'

"I went down and asked with my voice quivering with emotion : 'What is it that makes you so uneasy this evening? you are more thoughtful than usual.'

"The Emperor raised his hand to his forehead, and said after a moment's hesitation :

"'Yes, I must tell you, mother, but I entreat you not to repeat it to a single human being, not even to Pauline.'

"He smiled, kissed me, and continued :

"'I tell you that I am going to-night.'

"'Whither?' I asked.

"'To Paris ; but first and foremost, I crave for your advice.'

"'Let me try to forget for one moment that I am your mother,' I said. Then I reflected, and continued :

"'Go, my son. Follow up your fate, for it cannot be the will of Heaven that you should die by poison, or during a life of inactivity, but sword

in hand. It is probable that the plan will fail and that death will be the consequence of an unfortunate attempt. But you cannot remain here, it is my painful conviction. Let us hope that God, who has protected you in the midst of so many battles, will watch over you yet once again.'

"When I had finished these words, I embraced my son with deep emotion."

Before leaving, Napoleon called his mother's gentleman-in-waiting, who was deeply attached to her, and said :

"Colonna, I am starting for France to try my fortune again. I beg you in all earnestness to accompany her Highness on all her travels and to remain with her wherever she may choose to settle. I have every confidence in you, and leave her without a misgiving in your hands."

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Hundred Days—Farewell at Malmaison.

The Emperor re-conquered his land without one stroke of the sword, and after a triumphal procession of twenty-one days through France, Paris herself joyfully opened every gate to welcome him. But in spite of these many marks of enthusiasm, he was depressed after the intoxication of victory had passed away and fearful of his future fate. He felt constrained in his new rôle of a constitutional monarch, and looked like a toothless lion shorn of his claws, with nothing but a mane to proclaim him king.

In a drawer of his bureau he found the deed of submission to Louis XVIII., signed by the very men who were now shouting "Long live Napoleon," and although he himself had been alternately royalist, republican, and finally Emperor, he was unmerciful towards turncoats. France seemed to him like an actress, who in all good faith changes her costume and character, and he looked upon this rapid alternation of

homage and rejection with sadness, though without wonder.

There was so much to attend to that there was not even time to remove the Bourbon lilies, and the officers who unfurled the tri-colour flags probably concealed their white cockades, under a presentiment that they would soon be needed again. The oath of allegiance to Napoleon went no deeper than their lips, and the Emperor knew it. He knew, too, that success is the deity of France, and in tremulous anxiety he asked himself: "Will fortune smile on me yet again?"

The magnificent palace of the Tuileries, to which neither wife nor child was allowed to welcome him, was gloomy and full of painful recollections. He was certainly the Emperor, but where was the iron crown of Lombardy, which he had so proudly placed on his own head in the cathedral at Milan, with the words: "God has assigned it to me! Touch it not!" Where were his German allies? It is possible that he formed a far more vivid conception of the change in his life here, in the Tuileries, than he had previously done in Elba.

He set foot in France March 1st, and his entry into the capital with an ever-increasing army had followed on the 21st. April 17th, he left the Tuileries for the Elysée, where, in the intervals of absorbing work, he could saunter under the shady trees that cooled his aching brow.

He was convinced that the ground was slipping from beneath his feet; and if only the King of Rome had been with him, the sight of his fair head would have brought him a few moments' peace: but his child was a prisoner in the hands of his enemies. He contemplated the outlook with his far-reaching, but now despondent glance, and felt pain at heart as he heard the distant tramp of innumerable battalions drawing nearer and nearer to France. Sooner or later, of this he was convinced, his genius and indomitable courage *must* succumb to the overwhelming forces of his adversaries.

His mother had left Elba shortly after his departure, and arrived in Paris with her brother in the evening of May 31st, to find that her sons Joseph, Lucien and Jerome, and her daughter-in-law were already with the Emperor. She was delighted with the conduct of Lucien, who had never given in to the powerful ruler during the dazzling days of his prosperity, but had promptly hastened forward to support the re-conquered though tottering throne. The day after her arrival, the oath to the new constitution was administered on the Champs de Mars, and the Emperor distributed the colours. He drove to the spot in the coronation coach drawn by eight horses, wearing a white silk coat, a plumed hat, and his Imperial mantle. Joseph, Lucien, and Jerome wore cloaks of white silk embroidered

with gold, and the Chancellor, Cambacérès, one of blue velvet, covered with bees. The Marshals rode by the door of the coach, and not one of the crown officials was absent—armed heralds, pages, chamberlains, all had their share in this last magnificent pageant of Napoleon's Empire.

His mother occupied a seat close to him during the ceremony, together with Queen Hortense and her two young sons. But the dense mass of human faces, the brilliant uniforms, the flags that fluttered in the wind, the gigantic eagles which the Emperor handed to his veterans, failed to strengthen the confidence of Letitia in the future. Her beautiful countenance bore the imprint of deep seriousness, and cruel forebodings filled her every thought.

Napoleon set out to join the army June 12th at half-past three in the morning, after bidding farewell to his mother, his Ministers, and Queen Hortense. Just as he was stepping into the carriage, he caught sight of the wife of General Bertrand, and taking her hand, he exclaimed, as though overcome by a presentiment of St. Helena :

"Let us hope, Madame Bertrand, that we shall not soon regret that we ever left Elba."

* * * * * *

It was the battle of Waterloo* that decided

* "Bonaparte's reputation has been wrecked, and his last grand stake has been lost in this tremendous conflict."—*Times*, June 22nd, 1815.

the fate of the Emperor, and for a second time he had had to abdicate the throne, after which he awaited the judgment of the Provisional Government at Malmaison, in the company of his mother and Queen Hortense. His behaviour for a time was inexplicable, for he seemed to have lost his memory and never referred to present affairs, while he talked incessantly of bygone days, of his first wife, who had died when he was in Elba, and of the happy days which he had spent with her at Malmaison.

But the thundering of cannon, as it re-echoed from the plains of St. Denis, roused him from his lethargy. Then officers and old soldiers in dusty rags appeared before him and told of the approach of the enemy, with the separation between Blücher and Wellington. The allies were advancing in two distinct columns of 60,000 men each, with a distance between them that rendered it possible to attack one army before the other could march to its relief.

Even in the midst of disquiet and anxiety around him, Napoleon seems to have entertained a vague hope of again playing a conspicuous part, even as by a miracle, and the reports of his veterans evoked all his old martial instincts.

He occupied the nights of June 28th and 29th in completing his plan of defence, when he proposed to put himself at the head of the remnant of the army from Waterloo, and

promised to rout either the Prussians or the English. Early in the morning he sent General Beker with this suggestion to the Provisional Government, which was then residing in the Tuileries.

"I offer," he wrote, "to place myself at the head of the army—who, at the sight of me, will recover their courage—to attack the enemy in full fury and punish them for their audacity. I give my word of honour as a general, a soldier, and a citizen, that I will not retain the command one single hour after the victory has been gained; I swear to conquer, not for myself, but for France."

In full uniform and surrounded by his adjutants, he awaited the reply of the government, ready to mount that very minute, if it should prove favourable. General Beker returned with the message that Napoleon's assistance was no longer required. The conqueror at Austerlitz had to submit, and the Cæsar of all modern times, the Charlemagne of his day, was forced to accept a humiliating refusal at the hands of his late Minister of Police, Fouché, traitor and regicide. He had to leave before night-fall, and his preparations were soon completed. The Prussians were already on the left banks of the Seine, and the delay of a few hours in Malmaison would have made him their prisoner. He exchanged his uniform for civil clothes, while his mother and brothers, Queen Hortense, and a few courtiers

and soldiers assembled to bid him farewell. He had not thought of the need of money, and Hortense entreated him to accept her diamond necklace, which he at first refused, finally yielding to her weeping protestations and allowing her to stitch it into his clothing. He embraced his faithful friends and conjured them to remain firm in unity and courage. Then, with tears in their eyes, they all withdrew and left Letitia alone with her son. A national guard in uniform came to the room and begged to be allowed the honour of saying good-bye to his Emperor. He gave his name, the actor Talma, whom Napoleon had known from his youth, and who had become almost a personal friend. After a few moments he left the room, but as he was going out he saw something of the parting between mother and son.

"I was present at a tragic scene—the Emperor's farewell," he related the following day.

"He showed no signs of weakness, but what an expression lay on his countenanee, in his whole demeanour, and what thoughts must have rushed through his brain in that brief time! Tears were rolling down his mother's regular features, as she faltered just the three words, while holding his hand:

'Farewell, my son.'

And the Emperor's rejoinder was equally impressive in its brevity:

'Mother, farewell.'

He took her in his arms, and she was the last to receive his embrace."

Then he hastily entered his carriage, and all present burst into tears ; while the populace—who still loved him, and were watching his departure —exclaimed :

"How is it possible that such a great man should be so forsaken in misfortune!"

* * * * *

The following day, Cardinal Fesch wrote to Pauline Borghèse :

"The Emperor was at Malmaison yesterday, and we spoke of you. He begs of you to pay attention to your health and not to be troubled about him. He is bearing his sorrow with singular equanimity. Madame will remain in France with me, until we learn what fate Providence has decreed for her children. Lucien has left for London in order to clear the way for the remaining members of the family.

You must consider no sacrifice too great, for strict economy is an absolute necessity, and under present circumstances we are all poor."

CHAPTER XXV.

Letitia again goes into exile—Murat and his fate—Letitia's behaviour towards Caroline and her other children at this time—Her appeal to the Sovereigns of Europe—Letter to the ex-queen Julie.

It was reported throughout Europe that Napoleon had fallen in the battle of Waterloo, and Jerome's wife heard and credited the news. She wrote a despairing letter to her husband, June 30th, in which she complains :

"My heart is breaking at the thought of the cruel position of our mother; express my deep sympathy to her and the earnest wish that we may all be able to leave our future in the hands of God."

But events themselves were even more rapid than report. The Bourbons returned to Paris, the Bonapartes had a second time to seek safety in exile, and Napoleon was on his way to St. Helena as the prisoner of the English.

Letitia's health had completely broken down under this weight of sorrow, and she was unable

to leave the capital before the arrival of the Bourbons, while all the other members of her family had made good their escape, except Cardinal Fesch, under whose protection, as soon as she was able, July 19th, the unhappy mother hastened her departure, accompanied by an Austrian officer. She was scarcely able to bear the fatigues of the journey, and yet she was not permitted to rest on the way. Kindness and sympathy awaited her in every town and country district through which she passed, and she was greeted by shouts of "Long live the Emperor; Long live the Emperor's mother!"

They travelled through Switzerland to Italy, when Pius VII. again invited Letitia to take up her residence in Rome, which she did after a brief stay in Sienna. Shortly after her arrival she wrote to Cardinal Consalvi:

"I am indeed a Mater Dolorosa, and the sole comfort that remains to me is that the Holy Father is willing to forget the past and to remember only his unfailing kindness towards my family."

She had lost her courtiers and flatterers, but true friends remained, and her life had already made her far more familiar with adversity than with pomp and prosperity. As a young woman, her strength of character had developed during the stormy days in Corsica; while in middle life, during the success and brilliant advancement of

her children, she had never felt at ease in their midst. But in later years she exhibited a dignity and calmness in misfortune that recalled the Roman matron of ancient times.

On her arrival in the Holy City she was still hopeful that her son had escaped in safety to America, and though she never doubted that his crown and sceptre were gone for ever, she still trusted that he was a free man. And then came the news that he was a prisoner on board the *Bellerophon*, bound for St. Helena, and the thought of the barren island in that distant ocean, with her son in the uncontrolled power of his enemies, was as grievous a blow as could possibly strike the heart of a mother.

Actuated by fear and hatred, his jailers resolved that he was neither to receive nor despatch a single letter, until it had been read by the English officials on the island, which naturally hampered the correspondence between himself and his family, and Letitia had the mortification of knowing that every one of her letters was opened by the Governor.

It was not till the return of Las Cases that she had the least conception of her son's pecuniary difficulties, and immediately—without reservation—she placed all that she possessed at his disposal. She had been accused of parsimony in the days of splendour and superfluity, and now her heart was filled with grief that she was restrained from

giving him all that she had. Several considerable sums of money and articles of great value which she sent never reached their destination; but 100,000 francs must be excepted, for which Napoleon had petitioned, while complaining of the painful privations to which he was exposed.

His mother felt and suffered with him, powerless to help, or even to die with him; though she would gladly have made herself his slave for the satisfaction of living by his side, and, in spite of her advanced years, she would have feared neither the fatigues of the long voyage, nor the insalubrity of the climate. She entreated, again and again, that she might be allowed to share her son's exile, but, in spite of the renewal of her petition each year of the Emperor's life, it met with the same decisive refusal.

To the nervous and fearful of Europe, Napoleon, even under the guardianship of Sir Hudson Lowe, was an incubus under which it was difficult to breathe with freedom, and the Bourbon government in France, as well as his enemies on the Continent, continued to abuse him and every member of his family, not even sparing his aged mother. No venomous expression was too strong respecting the former Emperor, and the withering censure that fell from the lips of those who, up to the day before his fall, had been his humble courtiers, weighed heavily on Letitia in her helpless position. She forgot that

he had been a scourge to the lands of those monarchs who now held him in confinement, and that the son whom she idolised was looked upon by many as a miscreant whose punishment was richly merited.

Her usually pale cheeks became crimson with indignation as she read the current attacks and invectives against him, and although not a murmur escaped her lips concerning her own trials or the fate that had befallen her other children, she wept that the arbiter of the world, for whom the limits of Europe had proved too narrow, should end his days in St. Helena. Her son had fallen, and she said to herself: "You who are the mother of this man must forget the world; you can never be happy again, for misfortune has overtaken your son." *

Both she and Napoleon attributed a large share of their sorrow to the treachery and defection of Murat, and all communication with Caroline and her husband had been broken off by Letitia. On her arrival in Rome, after the Emperor's first abdication, Murat had sent his mother-in-law twelve valuable horses as a present, but she instantly returned the gift and expressed her utter abhorrence of traitors and treachery.

Caroline's unceasing efforts to bring about a reconciliation were unavailing, and Letitia

* Letitia's *Mémoires*, taken down from her dictation by Rosa Mellini.

persistently refused to see her daughter again. But in spite of the prohibition, the Queen of Naples once succeeded in entering her mother's presence, and asking her with tender solicitude what she had done to merit such treament.

"What you have done?" answered Letitia, "you have betrayed your brother, your benefactor!"

The daughter objected that her husband had sole control over his own policy, that urgent circumstances and the interests of his kingdom had forced him to break with France, and that nobody, least of all Letitia, could conscientiously attach any blame to her. "You have betrayed your benefactor," repeated the angry mother. "You ought to have exerted your influence to the utmost to withhold your husband from his disastrous decision; only over your body should he have been able to accomplish such a deed. The Emperor was his benefactor as well as yours. Leave me, Caroline"; and she turned her back upon her daughter.

On hearing that Napoleon had left Elba, Murat, who no longer felt secure on the throne of Naples, had taken up arms against Austria, without either plan or reason, and after the loss of two battles, returned home to find his capital in revolt. He fled to France, but Napoleon forbade him to approach Paris, "to remain where he was until he was wanted."

After the battle of Waterloo, he fled to Corsica, where he felt sure of help, and at the head of some 200 adherents he meant to strain every nerve to regain his lost crown. But his vessels were dispersed in a heavy gale, and he himself was cast on the coast of Pizzo in Calabria, where he was captured, tried by a military commission, and shot October 13th, 1815.

Even after this tragic end, there was still no reconciliation between mother and daughter, and it was not until after the death of Napoleon that Letitia finally yielded to the reiterated efforts of Caroline to obtain forgiveness; though even then, while her lips uttered the words of pardon, her heart could not forget the traitorous act of desertion.

She was in sorrow, too, about her other children, most of whom were in exile, many of them in poverty. They were all more or less stunned by the fall of the Emperor, and incapable of realising the height from which they too had been hurled, as well as their present utter insignificance. Their mother had never been dazzled by grandeur, and was consequently the only one to grasp the position; she had known the heights of success, and the depths of misfortune, and these facts had given her a peculiar feeling of compassion with human nature, not unmingled with contempt. She was never mistaken in her children, though she longed to be

able to impart to them some of her own strength of character. She used to say: "I have never valued servile marks of honour, nor trusted to the flattery of courtiers. If my sons had been more mindful of my precepts, they would have been better off than they are now."

And on another occasion she remarked: "My children have never been able to understand, as I have done, the depths of humiliation into which we have sunk since the removal of the Emperor."

Jerome was the most impoverished of her sons, and his extravagant, luxurious tastes, which had always been his bane, made it difficult for him to retrench, while he could never forget that he had once been a king. He was incessantly beseeching his mother for money, while, in addition to being overwhelmed with debts and dunned by his creditors, he was tormented with terror lest the children, who might be with their aged mother, should induce her to make a will unfavourable to himself.

Letitia lavished gold on her youngest child, at the same time that she admonished him to be careful. Her own economy never waned, and it cut her to the heart that her children learnt nothing in the school of adversity. April 3rd, 1818, she wrote to her daughter-in-law, Catherine:

"You must be perfectly aware that there is one member of the family who is supremely

unhappy, and far more in need of help than any one of you others."

She wrote to Jerome:

"I mourn that I cannot impart my character to you. I am crushed by bad news for a moment, but in the next I am far more actuated by hope than by despair. Imitate me! Retrench in your household; if needful, break it up, dismiss every servant! It would be more honourable to struggle against adversity and conquer, and I am convinced that Catherine is strong-minded enough to draw in as closely as possible. It is only a mother who can give this advice, and if you follow it, you will have nothing more to fear, all to hope for."

She wrote to her son Lucien:

"You ought to have learnt long ago that the greater part of human life consists of misfortunes and disappointed hopes; the realisation of the fact gives us strength to triumph over adverse circumstances, especially if they are not the result of our own folly."

To a third of her children, she remarked:

"A man must live suitably to his position. If he has ceased to be a king, it is ridiculous to pose as one. Rings adorn fingers, but they may fall off and the fingers remain."

Even Caroline tormented her for money, and sent friends to Rome to implore for help, but her mother replied that all she possessed belonged to

the Emperor, from whom she had received it Elisa, who was anxious to purchase an estate, was not more successful than her sister. Letitia had once observed that the most suffering of her children was always the one next her heart, and the prisoner in St. Helena was certainly the first in her thoughts at this time. She wrote therefore to her daughter:

"In happier days my hand was ever open to my children, but it is my present duty to keep my fortune intact. You must not forget that I am ready to deprive myself of every comfort, if he, to whom I owe my all, should require my help."

August 27th, 1818, she sent the following letter to the Emperors and Kings who were assembled at Aix-la-Chapelle:

"A mother who is more cast down than words can express, has long been in hopes that your Imperial and Royal Majesties would restore her to happiness. The imprisonment of the Emperor Napoleon is certain to be brought under discussion, and your magnanimity, your power, the recollection of former circumstances will undoubtedly induce your Majesties to co-operate on behalf of a sovereign in whose career you once took so keen an interest, and whom you included in your friendship. Can you allow him to perish in cruel banishment, this former ruler, who cast himself on the mercy of his enemy because he believed in his generosity? My son might have

besought the Emperor, his father-in-law, for a refuge; he might have submitted to the Emperor Alexander, who was at one time his friend; he might have fled to the King of Prussia, who would hardly have ignored their former alliance. Is England to be allowed to punish him for his confidence in her rulers? There is no longer any need to fear the Emperor Napoleon; he is ill, and even if he were well and still in possession of the means which Providence at one time placed in his hands, he has a perfect abhorrence of civil war. Sires! I am a mother, and my son's life is dearer to me than my own. Forgive me that in my agony I dare to address this letter to your Majesties. Do not allow a mother to plead in vain, when she appeals to you against the long-continued cruelty that has been exercised towards her son. In His Name who is Mercy itself, help, that my son's misery may cease, help, that he may regain his liberty. I entreat this first of God and then of you, His vicegerents here on earth. Interests of state have their limits, and in the immortality of the future no attribute will meet with higher commendation than the generosity of the conqueror."

The letter was ignored, and the Emperor's condition remained unchanged. In their exaggerated fear of the very name of Napoleon, the Bourbons accused his sorrow-stricken mother of exciting the populace to revolt. Many parts of

Europe were startled by the revolutionary movements of 1820, and it was rumoured that Letitia had agents in her pay who were to create disturbances in Corsica in favour of her son, and that the whole of France was undermined by a conspiracy to win adherents to his cause, while some people pretended to know the exact number of millions that Madame Bonaparte was devoting to the project.

Louis XVIII. had never felt secure on his throne, and the spreading of these false rumours became sufficient to incite the French government against the Emperor's mother and credit her with a serious plot. On the urgent representation of the French Ambassador in Rome, the Pope unwillingly and without the least faith in any report, consented to send his Secretary of State to Letitia in order to inquire into the matter. The messenger accordingly went to her palace and enumerated in detail the different points of the accusation in circulation, as well as the motive of his visit, adding that he felt extremely grieved to have such a commission thrust upon him. She listened to the end without once interrupting him, then, when he was silent, she remarked with dignity :

"Tell the Pope, and let my words be transmitted to Louis XVIII.: If I were fortunate enough to possess the millions with which I am so magnanimously credited, I should certainly not

use them to create disturbances in Corsica, or to acquire adherents for my son in France; he has sufficient. I should employ them to fit out a fleet and to remove the Emperor from St. Helena, where the most iniquitous perfidy is holding him in bondage."

Then she bowed and withdrew.

The Emperor's sickness and sufferings were no secret to his mother, and caused her the keenest grief and anxiety. Whenever she spoke of the allied sovereigns, she never failed to repeat: "I knew they would be the death of me."

Her daughter Pauline observed one day to the Duchess d'Abrantès, as they were walking together on Monte Pincio:

"You see how mother mourns over the misfortunes of my brother. Pain will not bring her to the grave; she will suffer a long time yet, but her agony is more acute than that of the Emperor."

Cardinal Fesch, Lucien, and Pauline were the only members of her immediate family that were allowed to be near her, prior to the death of the Emperor. After the second abdication, Lucien had been incarcerated as a state prisoner in the citadel of Turin, but had been released at the earnest intercession of the Pope, and rejoined his family in Rome, though he more frequently resided on his property among the Alban Hills. Letitia was often heard to say that if the sentence

of banishment from France should be repealed for herself and her children, she should return and end her days in Corsica.

Joseph Bonaparte urged her to join him in America, but she did not care to leave Italy. September 5th, 1818, she wrote to her daughter-in-law Julie, who had been left in France, on account of her delicate health :

" I have received a letter from Joseph in which he tells me that he has sent an escort for Zénaïde,* in case you are not strong enough to accompany her yourself. I can well understand the grief which you must feel in parting with a beloved daughter, and I admit that Zénaïde's studies and development may suffer in a land where the conditions are not favourable for the cultivation of her talents. Thus you will naturally feel anxious in exposing her to such a long voyage, without her mother, but it is just that a father should have his part in his children, and that one should be with him to share the sorrows of his life.

" Joseph asks me why you do not remove to Rome, and I have replied quite straightforwardly that you are always hoping to rejoin him, and that there is nothing to attract you in France, where I know you are living in complete retirement and

* " Zenaïde was the eldest daughter of Joseph and Julie, born 1801, married her cousin, son of Lucien Bonaparte, 1822, and died 1856.

with rigid economy. He seems to reproach me that I do not go to America, and believes that it is my attachment to the Cardinal that detains me in Rome. But my age and infirmities warn me against exposure to a long voyage and subsequent change of climate, though if Joseph had been in the same unhappy position as the Emperor, I should never have hesitated for one moment to join him. But he is well and free, and in this case need I entirely ignore myself? If the whole family were to emigrate to America, then I should certainly not demur to face the voyage, nor the discomforts of the climate."

CHAPTER XXVI.

Letitia and Napoleon's enemies—Marie Louise and the Emperor of Austria—The Duke of Reichstadt.

During her residence in Rome, Letitia dictated the *Mémoires* to which I have already alluded, and which were taken down by her companion, Rosa Mellini. They close with the following words: "My life ended with the fall of the Emperor, when I renounced everything and for ever; society, even the theatre which had formerly been my one distraction in times of heavy trouble. My children and relations have frequently urged me to go to the play, but I have always refused, and indeed consider the suggestion almost an insult."

She rarely alluded to the grandeur of the past, though she continually spoke of the devotion and respect which her children had invariably shown her, and preferred to recall Napoleon as a child rather than as the centre of Imperial splendour, while her severe, serious countenance would

brighten when she spoke of his birth, and she repeatedly exclaimed: "I am more than an Empress, for I am mother to Napoleon the Great."

With the exception of Lord and Lady Holland, she never opened her house to Englishmen or any representative of other European Powers, but maintained an implacable hatred against all the opponents of her son.

Napoleon III. of later days, at one time thought of applying for permission to enter the Russian army, and consulted his grandmother on the subject.

"Is not your name Napoleon?" she inquired.

"Yes, certainly," replied her grandson.

"Then you ought to know what it behoves you to do," she said severely.

One day it was suggested to her that she should exchange the Imperial arms on her carriage for her own, or those of her husband.

"Why should I?" she said. "The whole of Europe bowed to the dust before my son's arms for ten years, and her sovereigns have not forgotten it."

As she was taking the air on the Corso one afternoon, the crowds of carriages became so dense that the coachman had to drive at a foot-pace, when two Austrian officers, recognising the Imperial arms on the carriage, came close up and peered into it. Letitia had observed the move-

ment, and noticed the hated Austrian uniform. She let down the window and asked:

"Gentlemen, what is your pleasure with the mother of the Emperor Napoleon?"

The disconcerted officers bowed respectfully and rode on.

She could never forgive the Emperor of Austria for joining the enemies of Napoleon, nor his daughter, who had shared the prosperity of her son, but had forsaken him in the day of adversity.

In the course of the year 1819 the Austrian Emperor visited Rome, and the Palazzo Bonaparte was the only house that was not illuminated in his honour. It stood cold and gloomy in lofty defiance at the corner of the Corso, and by order of Napoleon's mother, even the blinds of each window were drawn tightly down. Her undutiful daughter-in-law had accompanied her father for some distance, and as they were approaching the Papal States, a gentleman-in-waiting suggested that the ex-Empress had better inquire if Madame Letitia would receive her if she continued her journey to Rome.

The Austrian Ambassador was deputed to wait upon Madame Mère and ascertain her views.

"Your visit and the communication you have to make certainly surprise me," observed the Emperor's mother, in a severe tone. "You insult my daughter-in-law by asserting that she is

travelling in Italy, instead of living with her husband in St. Helena. The person of whom you speak cannot be my daughter-in-law. It must be some unscrupulous woman who has dared to deck herself with my name." The reply was conveyed to Marie Louise, who, if report says true, was covered with shame, and retreated in all haste to Parma, without setting foot in the Eternal City.

Her father had arranged to visit his connection the ex-queen of Etruria, whose residence was next door to the palace occupied by Napoleon's mother. The Austrian adjutant mistook his orders, and proceeded to the house of Letitia Bonaparte, where, on entering the salon, he began in a loud voice:

"My gracious master, the Emperor of Au——"

But he got no further, for the lady of the house had risen, and interrupted him:

"Go and tell the Emperor of Austria your master, that there can be no intercourse between him and the mother of the Emperor Napoleon." She had more than one cause for complaint, for her grandson was in the hands of the Emperor of Austria, and she was prohibited from seeing him again, or even writing to him. Without mentioning his name or that of his father, the maternal grandmother of the King of Rome had prepared a document, in which she announced

that "the Archduchess Marie Louise had given birth to a son, to whom, rank, arms, and the family name had been assigned."

The proud Corsican laughed bitterly when this was told her, and observed: "We are certainly even with the house of Austria, for it seems when they gave Marie Louise to my son, it was not as his wife, but as his mistress." On another occasion she exclaimed: "Whatever their plans may be with reference to my son's son, it is certain that he will never bear a better name than his father's. The title 'Duke of Reichstadt' is meaningless, but the name of Napoleon Bonaparte will resound to the world's end, and be for ever taken up as echo wafts it to the shores of France." She loved this child whom she was never to see again, and the more hopeless the accounts she received of the condition of the Emperor, the more eagerly were her thoughts fixed upon his son. She sometimes dreamt that her family would yet rule in France, but the hope of a new rising of the Bonaparte star never obscured her clear judgment, and the only step she took in her dignified retirement was to sign every petition in favour of the prisoner in St. Helena. And even though actuated by motherly devotion, it was done with the thoughtful calm which is peculiar to minds that are never clouded by illusions. Her wakeful nights and lonely days were filled with the vision of a resuscitated Empire, though

she could neither grasp the possibility, nor the requisite means. But every morning her fervent blessing was breathed on Napoleon's son, who was just as much a prisoner by the Danube, as she herself by the Tiber.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Napoleon in St. Helena—Letitia receives news of the Emperor's death—Visit of Antommarchi to Napoleon's mother—Death of Pauline Borghèse.

THE health of Napoleon had long been a source of intense anxiety, and the hopeless accounts that reached Rome from Longwood were reducing his afflicted mother in despair.

In consequence of an appeal of the Pope to the English Government, she obtained permission to accede to the Emperor's request, and sent him two priests, a physician, and a couple of servants. During his walks on the island he had made the acquaintance of a little girl, of whom he became very fond, and interested himself by instructing her in religious knowledge. One day he said to her :

"A priest is coming who will prepare you for your first communion, and me for death."

Five years were granted to the conquered Emperor to consider his past life and his position

in the history of the future, to justify his conduct before men, and to humble himself in the sight of God. And all these years he stood on the threshold of the grave into which he was descending step by step, grander in the expiation of his errors than he had formerly been in his worldly pomp and honour.

The attendants whom his mother had been allowed to send out reached St. Helena towards the close of 1819; a young Italian doctor (a Corsican, selected by Cardinal Fesch) named Antommarchi, Abbé Buonavita, who had formerly been a Missionary in Mexico, together with a young Abbé Vignale, and servants who were to fill up the gaps caused by sickness or other reasons.

The Emperor was deeply moved as he listened to all that the new-comers could tell him about his family, especially Letitia, Pauline, Joseph, and Lucien. These two brothers offered to spend three years alternately in the island, while Letitia and Pauline repeated through Abbé Buonavita their wish to be allowed to share his captivity. But Napoleon, who felt that death was near at hand, would agree to none of these propositions. His first inquiries were for his mother. "She has always loved me," he said, "and has been a remarkable woman all her life, a mother beyond all praise and endowed with almost superhuman courage and strength of mind."

Elisa Baciocchi, who, like all her brothers and

sisters, had lost her crown, had been spending the last four years in Trieste in warm friendship with Jerome and his wife, who had also found a temporary refuge in that city. The misfortunes of her family and the persecution to which she had been exposed seriously affected her health, and she died August 6th, 1820. Napoleon received the announcement in a newspaper of this first break in his family, since as a young officer he had stood by the death-bed of Archdeacon Lucien in 1791, and quietly said: "Elisa has shown me the way, and I shall soon follow."

Abbé Buonavita's health gave way under repeated attacks of fever; he was compelled to return to Europe, and Count Montholon, one of Napoleon's Council of State, who with General Bertrand and their respective families, as also his faithful head *valet de chambre* Marchand, had accompanied the Emperor, utilised the opportunity to send detailed acconnts of her son's condition to Madame Bonaparte.

On March 17th, 1821, he wrote to the Princess Borghèse respecting the hopeless state of the dying hero, that she might break the news to her mother, and closed his letter with the following words:

"The London newspapers are continually issuing false reports dated St. Helena, evidently with the design of misleading Europe. The Emperor counts upon you to make known his

condition among influential Englishmen. He is dying without help on this abominable rock, and his agonies are intolerable."

April 15th, 1821, Napoleon made his will, and bequeathed all the valuables of which he was still possessed to be divided among his son, his mother, his brothers and sisters. His decorations and the most costly of his treasures were to be sent to the Duke of Reichstadt; while he especially noted for Letitia, among other things the silver lamp which had lighted his room during the long sleepless nights of hopeless agony. He ordered his valet to cut off his hair, and to divide it among the Empress, his mother, brothers, and sisters; and the following day he added with his own hand:

"I will to Madame, my good and dearly loved mother, all the busts and paintings that are in my rooms, also my sixteen silver eagles, which she is to give to my brothers, sisters, and their children, as well as the Chinese chains and necklaces which Marchand will bring to her for Pauline."

As far as he was able, he remembered all who had ministered to him in St. Helena, and even those who had shown him kindness in his youth, not forgetting Costa Bastelica, who had helped his mother and her children in their flight during the Corsican revolt. Finally, he admonished his son to strive for closer relationship with his father's family.

April was nearing its close, and Napoleon had but a short time to live, when about a week before his death he said to his physician, Antommarchi :

" Immediately after my decease, you must sail for Italy and interview my mother and the other members of my family. Tell them that the great Napoleon died under the most miserable circumstances, in need, and forsaken by all but himself and his own glory ; tell them, too, that on his death-bed he pardons all the royal houses of Europe, the horror and infamy of his last moments."

The great hero needed to be purified by suffering, and activity of the body was freedom to the soul—humiliation and loneliness had to teach him how to stand face to face with death.

A fearful storm raged in St. Helena during the whole of May 5th, and the flowers and trees which the exile had planted with his own hand, were torn up by the roots ; but the tempest ceased at the setting of the sun, about six o'clock, when Napoleon passed away, with the words "*tête d'Armée*" on his lips, at the age of fifty-two, and his faithful valet laid him out in the martial cloak that he had worn as First Consul at the battle of Marengo.*

* "Thus terminated in exile the most extraordinary life yet known to political history. The sensation produced by his death will be a good deal confined in this country to its effects

In accordance with the Emperor's wish, a post-mortem examination was held in which it was discovered that cancer in the stomach had been the primary cause of his death; his liver, too, was affected, which proved that the climate of St. Helena had been prejudicial to his health. Grief and sorrow, added to lack of regular out-door exercise, had moreover accelerated the progress of the disease, and probably robbed him of many years of life. Only one priest and a few friends knelt in prayer by the body, and thus, in conjunction with the perfect stillness around, emphasised the contrast between this and many a stormy scene in his life, and recalled too the years of his exile followed by the lonely hour of death, as opposed to his early career, when Europe had trembled at his feet.

It was not till two months subsequently that the news at length reached Paris that the Emperor was dying, and his mother did not hear of his decease till July 22nd. During the first days of her sorrow, she would not even see her own children and begged her brother to leave her alone. Her thoughts and her tears were as though dedicated to the son who to the very last had been the best loved of all, not because he had been the greatest, but in her eyes the most

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as a partial relief to our finances, the expense of his custody at St. Helena being little short of £400,000 per annum."—*Times*, July 5th, 1821.

unhappy. Then, by degrees, her strength of character prevailed, and she requested Cardinal Fesch to reply to the letters of condolence which had poured in from every quarter.

August 1st he wrote to the ex-King Jerome:

"Nine days ago your mother heard of the Emperor's death, and you can picture to yourself the intensity of her grief, although Abbé Buonavita had in a measure prepared her for the worst. You will have felt convinced from the messages that she has sent you that her moral strength is by no means impaired. I even venture to affirm that it has increased in power. Her health has suffered less than at the time of Elisa's death, and she seems better able to grapple with her sorrow. She has kept her bed, and has had no feverish symptoms; except for her sadness and increasing weakness, she is well. Will you be less brave than she is? We have no further tidings than those furnished by the papers. Louis has arrived from Florence to comfort his mother, but must return in the course of a few days. He does not anticipate that there will be any difficulty now about your place of residence, in which case Madame hopes that you will not delay to come to her with the queen and your children."

Eleven days later Letitia wrote to Pauline:

"My health is remarkably good, considering all that I have suffered, and still have to bear."

Both Lucien and Louis hastened to support their mother in her deep affliction, but no word of comfort was of any avail, and they could only mingle their tears with hers. Louis begged her to join him in Florence, while Lucien entreated her to spend some time with him and his family in the neighbourhood of Viterbo ; but she refused both invitations, and declared her intention of remaining in Rome.

August 16th, she wrote to her daughter-in-law Julie :

"In spite of my intense grief, thanks to a gracious Providence my health is good, but still I cannot rouse myself from the deep melancholy which fills my life."

She implored the English Government to permit the body of her son to be sent to her, but her petition was ignored.

Shortly before his death the Emperor had observed :

"I wish to be buried on the banks of the Seine, among the French people whom I have loved so well. If that is impossible, I should like to lie among my own kindred at Ajaccio. But if my exile lasts till death, I wish to be interred beside the fountain which has procured me comfort." *

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* "A grave was prepared among some weeping willows, beside a fountain in a small valley called Slane's, very near to Longwood. It was under the shade of these willows that the

The authorities refused to permit the body to be sent to Europe, and he was buried by the spring whose cooling waters had so often moistened his parched lips. It was not until 1840 that his earthly remains were transferred to the Church of the Invalides in Paris. As soon as the last painful offices had been performed, the late Emperor's friends returned to Europe, and in accordance with his express wish, Antommarchi hastened to Italy, where he first sought an audience of Marie Louise at Parma, which was refused, but he caught a glimpse of the Emperor's wife one evening at the theatre. His visit to Louis Bonaparte, at Florence, was also a failure, on account of the ex-king's serious illness. In Rome he first sought the Princess Borghèse, who at once came forward to receive him in spite of her delicate health. After the death of her brother, but before the news reached Europe, she had at last gained the permission of the English Government to go to St. Helena, and it was with the deepest sympathy that she listened to the details that the physician was able to communicate. On leaving the Princess, Antommarchi went to Letitia, who was even more deeply affected than Pauline had been.

Emperor had his favourite evening seat, and it was there he had been heard to say that if he must be interred in St. Helena he should be pleased to lie."—*Life of Napoleon Bonaparte.*

"I was forced to be very careful in what I said," he wrote in his *Mémoires*, "and use the most cautious expressions. In short, I only dared to give her the merest outline of all that I had witnessed. But the second time that I saw her she was calmer, more resigned, and I was able to give her further details, which were, however, continually interrupted by her sobs, though if I hesitated, the unhappy mother dried her tears and began to question me afresh. It was a painful struggle between her own suffering and the craving to hear all; I never looked upon such terrible, heart-rending emotion. I saw her a third time, when she kindly expressed herself satisfied with my efforts, and gave me a diamond which I shall always wear, for it is the gift of the Emperor's mother."

After the death of Napoleon, Letitia, who was now in her seventy-fourth year, looked upon herself as the head of the Bonapartes, and in order to strengthen the bond which still kept them together, she wished more ardently than ever to have the different members of the family in her immediate neighbourhood. Jerome, his wife and children had at length obtained permission to visit her in Rome, and she looked forward to their arrival with eager longing. She had become thin and shrunken, and the alabaster-like colouring of her almost transparent skin seemed to foretell that her days were numbered,

though the impression disappeared in an instant when she began to speak, and her eyes shone with the lustre of black diamonds. Then one instinctively felt the power of the life concealed by the shattered exterior, and that the Imperial mother belonged to those who become bent and aged, but never crushed. She was the type of an old Corsican woman, such as are still met with in the mountainous districts of the island, and in families where the race has remained perfectly uncontaminated by foreign blood. She did not leave off her mourning after the death of her son, and was never seen in anything but a black woollen gown and a black cap, or rather turban, which was the fashion under the First Empire.

She burst into violent weeping when she saw Jerome for the first time after such a long separation, and stammered in a voice choked with sobs the names of the two children whom she had recently lost :

" Elisa ! Napoleon ! "

And yet she had not drunk her cup of sorrow to the dregs ; many a sharp and bitter pang was still in store for her. Death was busy around her and she alone was spared, as though the measure of her sufferings could never be filled.

We have seen that Pauline had always been her best-loved daughter, and their sojourn together in Elba, their long-continued intercourse in Rome, and the loyalty which this

daughter had shown to the fallen Emperor had strengthened the bond between them. Pauline's cheerfulness enlivened her serious-minded mother, while her loving sympathy cast a glow over a heart that yearned for the responsive affection of her children.

The Princess had been suffering for many years from a serious complaint, the rapid advances of which had caused anxiety to her family, and in September, 1823, when her condition had become alarming, she was obliged to leave Rome on account of the unsuitableness of the climate. She had been separated from her husband (whom she detested) for many years, though Prince Borghèse remained on the best of terms with Letitia.

Pius VII. had died at an advanced age a few weeks previously, and Leo XII. was the present occupant of the Papal Chair. Madame, who had long wished to bring about a reconciliation between her daughter and her son-in-law entreated the new Pope to exert his influence, and in consequence Prince Borghèse set out for Florence, to which city Pauline had been removed with extreme care. She had given him every cause for jealousy and displeasure by her loose and dissipated conduct, but on his entrance into her room, she stretched out her trembling hands, and entreated forgiveness for her offences against him in their married life. In her last hour, her

thoughts reverted to the one child she had had, and to her mother—whose weary eyes seemed to have lost all power to weep again. Jerome was the only member of the Bonaparte family who arrived in time to see her end, which took place June 9th, 1825. She left most of her property to her mother, and fixed her last glance on the portrait of the Emperor.

For the third time, in the course of a few years, death had robbed Letitia of one of her children; and from the Alban Hills, where she was spending the summer, she wrote to Joseph's daughters:

"We have lost poor Paoletta, and you can conceive my grief. My children are my only tie to life."

A few weeks later she closed an autograph letter to her grandchildren, with the following words:

"Farewell, my dear children, receive my blessing with a kiss, and never fail in your affection for me."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Life in Rome—Letitia breaks her hip; she becomes blind—Napoleon's statue replaced on the Vendôme Column in Paris.

LETITIA spent her winters in Rome in strict retirement, and generally passed the summer in the neighbouring Alban Hills. She rarely received strangers, but old soldiers of the Empire were always welcome. Her brother the Cardinal called on her every day, and in fact devoted his life to her service.

Lucien and Louis were the only two of her children that could visit her frequently, though Jerome, Catherine, and Queen Hortense often spent the winter in Rome, accompanied by their children who were devoted to "bonne-maman."

Since the death of Napoleon, the English Government had ceased to persecute the Bonaparte family, and the ex-King Joseph had even left America to take up his abode in England; but the Imperial Government would not allow him

to visit Italy, perhaps on account of his increasing likeness to the Emperor Napoleon, for whom he might easily have been taken by a superstitious people, who would have declared that the exile of St. Helena was among them. Letitia was deeply grieved at the prohibition which hindered her from seeing her eldest son, and when the announcement that his request to visit her had been refused was read aloud to her, she exclaimed in bitter agony :

"Poor Napoleon! They are enjoying their revenge to-day, but they trembled at the sight of you in times gone by."

From the highest officials at the Papal Court, down to the very poorest inhabitants of the city, she was universally respected. It was her pleasure to attend mass on foot at the churches of Santa Maria in Portica and San Lorenzo, and to enjoy the music in Trinidà, di Monte, where standing on the topmost step and leaning against the marble balustrade which leads from the Piazza d'Espagna to Monte Pincio, she could listen to the singing of the nuns behind their grating. She delighted to linger among the ruins of old Rome, and when she wandered on the Forum Romanum, or rested within the walls of the Colosseum, guides in charge of their parties would say :

"Look! That is Napoleon's mother."

She was also fond of driving out to the dreary

Campagna, but her favourite excursion was to the Villa Borghèse, her son-in-law's summer residence, whose splendid park bespoke the inherited wealth and magnificence of the race, where she especially loved to pace up and down its broad avenues during the bright mild days of autumn. Even when the giant trees were losing their leaves, as they fell whirling at her feet, and when winter spread its veil over the glowing tints of the south, she delighted to linger in its gloomy shade. "It seems to me," she used to exclaim, "that here I can breathe the air of France." She was accompanied in her walks by her gentleman-in-waiting, Colonna, her young reader, Rosa Mellini, and a distant connection, Signorina Ramolino. Her faithful Saveria had passed away in her house, a few days before the death of Pauline Borghèse.

Lucien's eldest daughter, Charlotte, whom we named in connection with her uncle Napoleon's second marriage, was her best-loved granddaughter and the most attentive to her aged relative.

April 22nd, 1830, Letitia, then about eighty, was walking in the Borghèse Park, accompanied by Charlotte, Monsieur de Presle, an old friend of the family, and Signor Colonna, on whose arm she had been leaning ; but on entering a narrower path, where two persons could not walk side by side, she let go, stumbled, and fell on the steep stony incline, before it was possible to assist her.

As she tried to rise the pain became acute in every limb, and she was with difficulty conveyed to her carriage, and driven back to Rome, when it was found that her hip was broken, and her condition at the time was so serious that the Pope ordered Cardinal Fesch to administer extreme unction in his name, an honour reserved exclusively for royal persons.

All the children that could attend hastened to her sick-bed, her sons Louis, Lucien, and Jerome, her daughter-in-law Julie, with her two daughters Zénaïde and Charlotte, Lucien's wife, and the ex-queen Caroline, who at last gained permission to see her mother, whom she had so deeply offended. Fate had dealt harshly with them both, and what a meeting after a separation of fifteen years!

The ex-Queen of Naples desired to remain and nurse her mother, but the governments of Europe, especially that of Austria, became seriously alarmed that so many of the Bonaparte family should be together in one house. Caroline's presence caused them the greatest uneasiness, and they only allowed her to remain one month in Rome.

After her accident, until her death six years later, Letitia was never able to walk, and then the poor lame invalid had the misfortune to lose her sight. The drives on Monte Pincio and in the Borghèse park which had strengthened her

mental and bodily health were over, but through the open window she could hear the cheerful voices from the Corso, while the glowing beams of the southern sun lit up the dreary room in which she was a captive.

"The sun comes to visit me like a friend," she used to say, "but alas! I can no longer see him."

She adhered to her old habits, even in the weakness of age, and continued to spin and knit as long as her strength would allow, while from her bed or wheeled chair, she personally superintended every detail of her household. Her accounts were regulated each morning, and she never ceased to preach economy to her family.

A large empty press, with copper fittings, stood in the ordinary sitting-room, which was a constant source of anxiety to her younger grandchildren, who were shut up in it if they became too noisy at their play. She dressed in the morning for the day, and was wheeled through the different rooms, generally by Signor Colonna, the weakness of age making it impossible for her to use crutches. She woke early, and Rosa Mellini was the first to wait upon her and read aloud till ten o'clock, when she breakfasted in bed off a little mahogany table which the Emperor had used in St. Helena. She was extremely abstemious herself, though she provided liberally for her household. On being asked how it was

that she had preserved such sound health to advanced years, in spite of the vicissitudes through which she had passed, she would answer :

" I always rose from the table with an appetite, and under every misfortune that befell me I bowed to the will of God." She ate very quickly, and never remained at table one moment longer than was absolutely necessary. Napoleon used to say :

" I eat much too fast, it is a habit I inherit from my mother."

She drove out very occasionally after her accident, when she was carried to the foot of the staircase and carefully placed full length on a mattress in the carriage ; one of her ladies sat by her side, and they went at a foot's pace until they were outside the gates of the city. But the doctors soon advised the discontinuance of even this exercise, which proved too tiring and painful for the aged invalid, who had to content herself with a deep window seat on the second floor, where she could hear the rolling of the carriages, and the clattering of the horses' hoofs as their riders galloped past. Many of the foot passengers stopped beneath her window and involuntarily bowed in deep respect before the infirm old lady, who could not see the homage paid to the mother of the late Emperor, though she could hear footsteps stop and voices whisper :

" There sits Napoleon's mother."

"They cannot conceive that the poor, faded creature sitting here can be an Emperor's mother," she used to say to her reader. "Twenty years ago the drums beat when I crossed the Place du Carrousel in Paris, the guards presented arms when I entered the palace, and people crowded my carriage to catch a glimpse of me. Now I am only seen through a curtained window by a few who are restrained by fear of showing undue curiosity. The homage of to-day is worth as much as that of former years; I was Imperial Highness then, now I am simply Signora Letitia!"

Her only amusement consisted in listening to any books touching on the Emperor and his companions in arms, whether in favour or dispraise of their actions, and if they were written in a language that she did not understand, they were translated for her benefit. Wars had no horrors for her who had been present on the field of battle. One day she was listening to the *Mémoires* of General Lamarque, who blamed the Emperor for making Murat a king. Letitia seemed lost in thought for a moment, and her companion stopped in her reading. "Why do you leave off?" asked Madame Mère. "Do you think I am not capable of hearing the truth? The author is right, Napoleon was not infallible, and he committed an irreparable error when

he created Murat King of Naples. I foresaw the whole from the beginning, and when I stood on the height which I never wished to attain, and which I have never missed, people thought that I was an exceptionally happy woman. Could I be happy with a smile on my lips, but death in my heart?"

In another work that was read aloud, her son was repeatedly spoken of as a tyrant.

"Tyrant," she murmured, "he, who every moment of his life thought of France, always of France! Those who have ever seen him alone, as I have, could never call him a tyrant. In truth, at least a hundred years must pass away before the Emperor can be understood."

The July Revolution of 1830 broke loose, and, in the course of three days, the recently restored throne of the Bourbons was overturned, while the excited craving for liberty made itself felt in Italy also. The disturbances in the land—that had once owned the sway of her son—made such a strong impression on Letitia that she became ill; and her first thoughts turned towards her grandson, who was living in seclusion in Vienna, but who, as Napoleon II., might well aspire to the throne of France. All her heart's tenderness, which had been lavished on Napoleon, had descended to his son, the former King of Rome, who, in the Imperial palace at Vienna, was scarcely a less striking picture of fallen

greatness than his father had been on the barren rock in that distant ocean. She had not seen him since the crown, the sceptre, and every prospect of a brilliant future had been wrested from him.

The day after the outburst of the July Revolution, a proclamation had been issued in Paris suggesting that Napoleon's son, the child of Paris, should become sovereign ruler. It was reported in the Roman papers, and soon reached the ears of Letitia, who had it read aloud to her, and reminded those present that young Napoleon had already been proclaimed Emperor, June 22nd, 1815, while she expressed the hope that France would really recall him.

But she was disappointed, and Louis Philippe was elected, though among the revolutionists the Bonapartes had certainly been quite as numerous as the Orleanists. The new king felt bound to give Napoleon a niche in the Palace of Louis XIV., and ordered the immense picture by David, representing the coronation of the Emperor, to be hung on the magnificent marble staircase at Versailles.

After repeated annoyances, and a few short visits in Rome, the ex-King of Westphalia and his family at last obtained permission to fix their residence near to Letitia, with whom Jerome and Catherine had always been great favourites. They lived with her, to begin with, before their removal to a palace near at hand, which enabled

them to call at the "Palazzo Bonaparte" each day with their children, Napoleon and Mathilde, and where they generally met Lucien. Jerome, whose voice resembled Napoleon's, came to breafast and read the papers to his mother, but one morning he arrived earlier than usual with news from Paris, and entered quietly into her room, where she was lying ill in bed.

"Mother!" he said in a low voice, "can you hear me?" She nodded. "It is reported from Paris that orders have been issued to replace the Emperor's statue on the Vendôme Column."

His mother was silent for a moment, then she pressed the hand of her son with a glow of happiness which had long since vanished from her face, while she folded her hands in prayer, and tears streamed down from her sightless eyes. Two days later she exchanged her bed for the sofa, and seemed to be inspired with new life as she repeated again and again in her feeble voice:

"The Emperor's statue is to be raised again! The Emperor will be in the heart of Paris once more!"

A little model of the figure was brought to her, and it became her great delight to trace the form with her fingers, but when the details of the unveiling were mentioned she would exclaim suddenly:

"I shall never see the monument, my poor

eyes, how I miss them! If I were in Paris as in former days, God would give me strength to climb up the column that I might convince myself that the Emperor is really on the top. I fancy sometimes that they are deceiving a poor exiled mother, who is moreover crippled and blind. What can we be surprised at in this world? Age and misfortune make us distrustful." She used to inquire of her few visitors if they had been present at the uncovering of Napoleon's statue, if it was a fine one, and if it was distinctly visible; she never wearied of the subject.

One after another her children and grandchildren left Rome, and her life became as dreary as before, except for the frequent visits of Cardinal Fesch. Leo XII. had died in 1829, and his successor, Pius VIII., soon followed him to the grave. But it mattered not who was Pope, they were all filled with interest and sympathy for Napoleon's mother, and Pius VIII. frequently visited the exile and tried to comfort her under her grievous trials, when she would rejoin:

"God alone is unalterable. He had been too bountiful to me; and what He gave, He took away; His will be done! My pity is for my children who have suffered so cruelly."

The Pope could not but admire her resignation, and observed of her:

"This God-fearing woman deserves to be honoured by all the princes of the earth." Her

life had indeed been filled with trials, but it was not of these that she thought as she sat a prisoner to her chair, with her sightless eyes fixed on space; she forgot her sorrow, and dwelt solely on the remarkable man whom she had given to the world. The lustre of his government had at one time been painful to her eyes, but now that age and misfortune had veiled their light, her inner glance reverted more and more frequently to the ruling Sun of the Empire.

"My son was deposed," she used to say, "and perished in misery far from my side. My other children were banished, and here I am in lonely old age left to see one after another die before me, and yet I would not exchange my lot with the greatest queen on earth."

CHAPTER XXIX.

Visit from Count Prokesch-Osten—Death of the Duke of Reichstadt—Letter from Marie Louise to Letitia.

LETITIA'S tenderest thoughts were always turned towards Vienna and Schönbrunn, and she loved to be spoken to about Napoleon's son, the mention of whose name made her tremble with expectant hope. She recalled her presence at his birth over twenty years ago, at his baptism as his godmother, and three years later on, at the last tearful farewell when the child was banished from the Tuileries. And how rejoiced she would have been to receive a line, one little token of affection! But all intercourse between them had been persistently barred, and the lonely grandmother had not even the satisfaction of hearing how enthusiastically the young prince clung to the memory of his father's name. She had recently heard that he was in delicate health, and the possibility of his death seemed to extinguish the very last hope that was still left to her. In her will of 1829 she had constituted her son's son,

King of Rome, or Napoleon II., also called "the Duke of Reichstadt," her residuary legatee. "All that I possess came to me from the Emperor," she said, "and it is but just that I should return it to his child." But at the same time, she bequeathed considerable sums to her children and brother, as well as several annuities and remembrances to those who had been in her service, in addition to a large sum for the benefit of the poor in Corsica. Nearly all the precious souvenirs of Napoleon which she had been collecting, among them a cast of the Emperor's features, which Antommarchi had brought her from St. Helena, were destined for his son.

The Duke of Reichstadt's friend, Count Prokesch-Osten, spent the summer of 1832 in Rome, where he met in society Lucien Bonaparte's daughter Charlotte, now married to Prince Gabrielli. The Princess begged him to call on Letitia, and added how eagerly her grandmother longed to make his acquaintance. It was arranged that she should call for him the following day, July 21st, when Colonna and two ladies-in-waiting received them in the ante-room, from whence folding-doors opened into a large, lofty, richly-furnished salon, with heavy curtains before the windows, allowing only dim rays of light to enter the room. Charlotte went first, followed by Prokesch-Osten, who could just

perceive the noble dignified outline of Madame Mère, blind, lame, exhausted by the sorrows of her life, and clad entirely in black. She rose slowly, leaning on the arm of the princess, bowed to him, resumed her seat and motioned him to take a place by her side, when she addressed him in her pretty, gentle voice, filled with kindly feeling towards her grandson's friend. She spoke in French, grammatically incorrect, but with well-chosen expressions. The Count talked to her of the Duke of Reichstadt, while she listened with intense interest and emotion, interrupted by frequent questions which elicited details revealing several points of similarity in the characters of Napoleon I. and Napoleon II. Prokesch-Osten, who had been absent for some months, was unaware of the increasing gravity of his friend's illness, and tried to reassure Letitia, who concentrated her thoughts and wishes for her grandson in the following words:

"May he always act in accordance with the last will of his father! His time will come, and he will surely reign." She rose and begged to be led to the bust of the Duke, which she had ordered to be placed by the side of the Emperor. These she pointed out to her guest, as well as the portraits of her other sons, to whom she referred separately, and lingered for some minutes before those of Joseph and Lucien. Then finally she alluded in deep sorrow to the conduct of Marie

Louise.* The Count kissed her hand, and prepared to take his departure, but Letitia kept him at arm's length, made a strong effort to rise, and then stood in imposing dignity before him. He felt that she was trembling, as both her hands rested on his head; then he grasped the purport of her movement, and knelt at her feet, while Charlotte supported her. "As I cannot touch him," she said, "I breathe his grandmother's blessing on your head; I shall not last long, but my prayers, my tears, my wishes will follow him to the last moment of my life. Convey to him what I lay upon your head, what I entrust to your heart."

The young man then took his leave, and the same evening she sent him a miniature portrait of the Emperor, with a lock of his hair at the back, one as First Consul, a dice-box, ornamented with "N" and the Imperial crown, which the exile had used at St. Helena, and some other trifles, which Prokesch-Osten promised to take charge of for her grandson.

A few days subsequently the Count received news at Bologna that the son of Napoleon the Great had died at Schönbrunn, July 22nd. He must, therefore, have been entering the "valley of the shadow of death" at the very time when Letitia was sending him a blessing from her

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* She married her first chamberlain, Count Neipperg, afterwards raised to princely rank as Prince Montenuovo.

distant home. Napoleon I. had been far too fond of war, and his son too had wished to gain glory by the sword; but death claimed him before he had had time to fight, and the gruesome vaults of the Hapsburgs had already opened and closed over him.

The day after his death, the Empress Marie Louise wrote the following letter:

"To Madame Mère, in Rome,

Schönbrunn, July 23rd, 1832.

Madame,

In the hope of mitigating the bitterness of the painful communication which I have to send you, I will not allow a third person to undertake it, but write you myself. On Sunday, the 22nd instant, at five in the morning, my darling, fervently loved son, the Duke of Reichstadt, succumbed to his long and grievous sufferings. I had the consolation of being with him in his last moments, and of convincing myself that nothing was omitted that could possibly have preserved his life. But medical science was powerless to arrest the progress of the chest complaint which the physicians—from the first—unanimously declared to be of an alarming nature, calculated to end in death, at an age when the brightest hopes would be dawning upon him. God has ordered it otherwise; and for us there is nothing to do but to submit to His will, to share our loss,

and to mingle our tears. Accept, Madame, on this sorrowful occasion, the assurance of the kindly feeling entertained for you by your devoted daughter,

MARIE LOUISE."

Letitia was inconsolable, as she exclaimed:

"I am then destined by Providence to outlive all my children and to mourn their loss. Who will care for me in my old age, and receive my last sigh? I have lost the brightest jewel in my crown!"

She never replied to the letter of Marie Louise, to whom Cardinal Fesch wrote as follows, in his sister's name:

"Madame,

Although the cruelty of politics deprived me of all news of the dear child whose death you have announced to me, I have never ceased to entertain the devotion of a mother towards him, and the thought of him has been a source of comfort to me. God has seen fit to add this blow to the ceaseless painful bodily weakness consequent on my advanced years. I accept it as a fresh pledge of His mercy, for I feel convinced that He will richly make up to my grandson for the loss of earthly honours by the glories of His Kingdom.

Accept my thanks, Madame, for putting

yourself to painful inconvenience in your wish to alleviate the bitterness of the sorrow which will never leave me. My condition prevents me even signing this letter; I must, therefore, beg you to accept the handwriting of my brother."

CHAPTER XXX.

Death of several of Letitia's grand-children—Poems in her honour—Intention to repeal her sentence of banishment from France—Her reply—Visits of Frenchmen, who describe her and her home.

LIKE an old tree which has been spared by the axe of time, Letitia saw her branches broken one by one, and her leaves wither and fall. Stronger than her son had shown himself on the rock of St. Helena, she herself was a prisoner on the Tarpeian rock, from which even sorrow seemed powerless to hurl her, while her strong mind still asserted its influence over her body, which was a mere wreck. Towards the close of her life, her thoughts frequently reverted to the numbers of whom death had robbed her, the babies she had lost in Corsica, and her husband; the eldest son of Louis and Hortense, who had died at an early age; her daughter-in-law Josephine, Eugène and Murat, and the children who had died in her old age: Elisa Baciocchi and the lovely "Paulette."

And yet she lived on in the midst of all these graves, even when her tears flowed over the earthly mound of Napoleon in St. Helena, and the marble sarcophagus of the King of Rome.

And death was busy even in the latest years of her life: in the same year (1832) that the Duke of Reichstadt died, Napoleon III.'s gifted brother Napoleon Louis breathed his last, and on Easter Day, 1834, her grandson Prince Baciocchi fell from his horse and crushed his head against a column.

"There is some evil influence hovering over the third generation of Bonapartes," she used to say, "they die a violent death." Crippled, blind, living in a world of reminiscences, surrounding herself with objects that were associated with the dear ones who had gone before, she refused herself to all but a few intimate friends, who could talk to her of those whom she mourned. Hour after hour, her sightless eyes were fixed on the spot where the Emperor's bust stood; he had been dead fourteen years, and yet she could stil recall every change of feature from his babyhood, and hear his voice, which sometimes seemed to be speaking to her now. She had spent more than twenty years in retirement, faithful to the memory of her son, nearly forgotten by a new generation, though those who remembered her felt respectful admiration for the woman who had

so nobly borne the vicissitudes of life. The French poet Béranger wrote of her :

"La noble dame, en son palais de Rome
Aime à filer, car, bien jeune autrefois,
Elle filait, en allaitant cet homme
Qui depuis l'entoura de reines et de rois.

Près d' elle assise est la vieille servante,
Qui, nouveau-né, le reçut dans ses bras.
Au bruit de leurs fuseaux elles disent : 'Hèlas !
Que la fortune est décevante !'"

A German poet sang in her honour :

"Stolzer strebte keine Krone zu des Himmels Dom empor,
Ueberschattend sieben Reiche gleich ihr keine je zuvor ;
Keine haben die Orkane, Blatt für Blatt, gleich ihr entlaubt,
Haben keiner langsam modernd, Spross für Spross gleich ihr geraubt.

Alle : Vater, Mutter, Gatten riss der Tod von ihrer Brust,
Knickte Knospen, die des Schwellens, des Entfaltens kaum bewusst,
Liess den Risensohn verschmachten auf dem meerumwalten Stein,
Mordete den Sohn des Sohnes—sie verschmächt er, sie allein !

Frage, Bild der ew'gen Sonne, von der Riesin Gruft herab,
Frage ob es einen Helden deinem Sohne gleichen gab ;
Frage jeder deiner Schwestern : ob sie mehr als du beweint ?
Deine Frage wird von jeder mit verhülltem Haupt verneint."

The interest of French people became at last so strong that it was proposed to invite her to end her days among them, and the sentence of banishment against the Bonaparte family was to be repealed in favour of their unhappy mother. But the world's sympathy had come too late, and

she scorned the idea of returning without her children. April 26th, 1834, she wrote to the deputy, Sapey, with reference to the suggestion:

"Sir,

Such of you as can recognise the ludicrous in maintaining the regulation respecting the outlawry of my family, and yet can suggest an exception for me personally, have never understood either my principles or my character. I was left a widow at thirty, with my eight children to comfort me; then, when there was a prospect that Corsica would be separated from France, the loss of home and property did not alarm me, and I accompanied my children to the Continent. In 1814 I was with Napoleon in Elba, and in spite of my age I would have followed him to St. Helena in 1816, if I could have obtained permission; but instead, I was condemned to live as a prisoner of state in Rome. I do not know whether legal indictment or the interference of the Allied Powers brought about the banishment of my family from France, but I have lived to see that persecution against my connections has been carried so far, that all those whose devotion would have led them to reside in my neighbourhood have been compelled to leave Rome. I have been separated from all that can attach me to life, who share my memories, and can alone contribute to my happiness, if that could ever be attained on

earth again! It was then that I resolved to forsake the world, and to hope for no other bliss than that of the life to come. What could I find in France to counterbalance the indignities which would not be spared me by the present rulers, whose injustice will not allow them to forgive the honours to which my family have attained? I ask to remain unmolested in my grief, to exercise the strength of my will to the end. I shall never cease to share the lot of my children, which is the only comfort that is left me. At the same time, I beg to thank you, Sir, for the interest which you have kindly taken in me.

I remain,

Yours respectfully,

pro MADAME,

R. MELLINI."

Frenchmen who visited Rome at this period never failed to linger on the Piazza di Venezia, in front of the large corner house where lived the Imperial mother, whom death seemed to have forgotten amid the ruins of the city. The severity of its architecture and gloomy walls imparted to her palace a singular contrast with the magnificence of the surrounding buildings. Few of these travellers ventured to disturb her, but a couple of years before her death she received the visit of three Frenchmen, who have left an account of their interview. As they

crossed the threshold of the silent palace, they involuntarily ceased their conversation, and quietly and seriously ascended the stairs to the ante-room, where they found two lacqueys in the Imperial livery, one of whom announced them to a grave-looking Italian lady, Rosa Mellini, who led them into Letitia's bedroom.

The old lady was reclining in her wheeled chair, with her face turned towards her visitors, who remained standing at the door in deep respect.

"Come quite close to me," she said, "for I cannot see, and I want to tell you how delighted I am to welcome Frenchmen. There are but few left who care to visit the mother of the unhappy Emperor; only Englishmen and Americans who would like to see me, but I will not even acknowledge the former!"

There was not a tinge of colour on her cheeks, and the sight of her sharp black eyes was gone; but the kindly smile that played round her mouth imparted life to her countenance, which was almost without a wrinkle. Her beautiful profile, in spite of her advanced age, resembled that of a Roman Empress. She was wearing a white turban which did not conceal her striking forehead, of exactly the same form as Napoleon's. Her gown was of velvet, and an ermine cloak was thrown over her feet. Her hands, which she offered to the young Frenchmen to kiss, were as

cold as marble. By her side was a shabby little table on which she rested from time to time, and close by a magnificent pedestal, surmounted by a bust of the King of Rome.

"You see here all that I have that was my son's," she observed; "this little table was by his bedside in St. Helena, and his last look was turned towards that bust. He left me these two things in his will, poor child! a little table and a bust!"

"Alas!" she continued, "it is not a very cheerful thing to visit the Emperor's mother, an old woman with one foot in the grave. I have gone through a good deal in my life; when I was about thirty, I was left a widow with eight children, Napoleon was fourteen, and his father and I had been to see him at Brienne; my poor husband died away from me. You shall see his portrait."

She called an old lacquey, who wheeled her chair into the salon, and the visitors followed her. It was decorated with pictures of the kings queens, princes, and princesses of the Bonaparte family, all in court dress; and in a deep niche in the wall hung the portrait of the father of all these sovereigns. A colossal bust of Napoleon seemed to fill the room, which also contained paintings of Josephine, Hortense and Eugène Beauharnais, the King of Rome, and the future Napoleon III., but none of Marie Louise. Letitia

took up her usual position under the likeness of her husband, and her guests remarked to her that the Emperor bore a far stronger resemblance to her than to his father, from whom he had only inherited his grey eyes and the shape of his face. "Yes," she rejoined, "my son was nice-looking when he was in a bright humour; but when he was thinking over his gigantic plans, he wore a very serious expression, and I used to say to him: 'Child! it makes me angry when people remark that you are like me.' This always made him laugh, and then he kissed me. Poor fellow! he was so good!"

Before taking leave, the Frenchmen begged her to give them her blessing, which she did, and said, as she raised her hands:

"God grant that you may be happy, but submit to His will above all things. Think sometimes of Napoleon's old mother, who will soon be asleep."

CHAPTER XXXI.

Death of Catherine of Westphali—Letitia's life draws to a close—Her death and will—Her body taken to Corsica.

THE experience of years had taught Letitia to look death in the face, and like the Jews when celebrating their Passover, her staff was in her hand and her loins girt, waiting the signal to depart. It was evident that her life was nearing its close, although her authoritative voice was still powerful to rule her children on the very brink of the grave, and each member of the little circle that watched her declining years looked up to her with the deepest respect. Those of her family who had permission to live in Rome were constantly with her, while the others were still importunate in their prayers to be allowed to visit her.

Her favourite daughter-in-law, Catherine of Westphalia, "Trinette," as she was caressingly called in the family circle, died at Lausanne, November 29th, 1835. Her own relations

endeavoured to prevail on her to separate from her husband in 1814, but she had preferred exile, persecution, and poverty in company with him in a foreign land rather than riches without him. Napoleon said of her in St. Helena:"

"The noble self-sacrifice of this princess in 1814-15 is alone sufficient to inscribe her name on the pages of history."

Her health had been shattered by the sorrow and persecution to which she had been exposed, though she hoped that her life might still be prolonged, and the news that she too had passed away was the last blow to Letitia.

"Alas!" she said, "they all sleep far away from me, and I alone am left to mourn. God's will be done!"

She refused to see anybody after the death of Catherine and lived the life of a recluse, her strength failing day by day, till at last her voice was hardly audible to her attendants. But though worn out in body, her mind was perfectly clear and her moral energy unimpaired.

Lucien and Jerome were with her at the last, Louis was detained by ill-health at Florence, and neither Joseph nor Caroline, in spite of importunate entreaties, were allowed to hasten to her.

Napoleon's mother died of gradual decay, February 2nd, 1836, at seven o'clock in the evening, while the bells were ringing for evensong. Her death-bed was attended by Cardinal

Fesch, her sons Jerome and Lucien, the wife of the latter, Rosa Mellini, her connection Dr. Ramolino, and her faithful gentleman-in-waiting Colonna. She was perfectly conscious to the last, and fell asleep without a struggle, when the sculptor Thorwaldsen was at once sent for to take a cast of her face, which had preserved its beauty even in death.

In the beginning of my work, I pointed out that it was impossible to fix the date of her birth ; but if we accept the year that is generally quoted, she died at the age of eighty-seven. Immediately after the death of the Duke of Reichstadt she decided to alter her will, which she finally executed September 22nd, 1832, and which was opened the evening of her death ; it was long and detailed, composed in Italian, but translated into French, under the supervision of the Cardinal. She left considerable legacies to all the members of her household, to Colonna and Rosa Mellini, the greater part of her gold service to Joseph and Louis, with a small portion each to Lucien and Jerome, and the family portraits to Cardinal Fesch. Without specifying for what reason, she bequeathed to her daughter Marie Caroline the bare amount legally due to her, though she added a pearl necklace, probably symbolical of the tears which Caroline's behaviour towards Napoleon had caused their mother to shed. She had destroyed every document which might make the children

her debtors, and declared it to be her solemn will that no inquiries should be made respecting any money which she had already given to them, with the one exception of an acknowledgment for 300,000 francs which she had lent her daughter Caroline in 1815, which she had preserved. She bequeathed considerable sums to Ajaccio, the spot on earth she most dearly loved, and even ordered her heart to be sent to the city that was associated with the joyous recollections of her youth.

Rumours of Letitia's death had frequently been current in Rome, and when her last hour had really come, the inhabitants did not credit that she was worse than usual, and would not believe that she was really dead. It was just before the Carnival in Rome, and the Papal government, afraid of offending the French king, insisted that the funeral ceremonies should be of the simplest character. The Bonaparte family was forbidden to display the Imperial arms on the church door, though the authorities were powerless to prevent them from being embroidered at the corners of the pall and from being surmounted by the Imperial eagle, holding in golden letters :

"L. R. B.

Mater Napoleonis.'

She had left instructions in her will that the

funeral was to be on a modest scale, but that a considerable sum of money should be dispensed to the poor of the city by the hands of her brother. She had never liked vain and fulsome words, and any eulogistic speeches by her grave would have been eminently out of place.

The election of a Pope was in progress on the day that the Emperor's mother was laid to rest, and while the citizens of both sexes were flocking to St. Peter's to be present at the ceremony, one simple mourning coach, followed by a few faithful friends, drove away from the Palace at the corner of the Piazza di Venezia. A funeral mass for the repose of the soul of the mother of the Bonapartes was read in the church of "Saint Louis des Francais," and the organ pealed forth a solemn requiem, an eternal hymn of praise. All present, even her white-haired brother, had been children to her, and each one saw in her the last representative of a time that was no more. During the night of the 4th-5th of February her earthly remains were taken to Carneto in the neighbourhood of Civita-Vecchia, where the coffin was lowered into the vault of the Church "Les Dames de la Passion," but many years later it was removed to Ajaccio to be interred with Cardinal Fesch, according to their mutual wish.

Her death excited very little comment in Italy, where she had passed so many years of her

life; for France she had virtually died a quarter of a century back, and no more tears were shed for the half-forgotten mother of Napoleon than for the son of the Emperor, who had been born the child of France, but had died a prince of Austria. And yet in France, and other lands too, there were many kind expressions touching the woman "who deserved the sympathy of the universe."

"The death of Madame Letitia in Rome has attracted but little notice," we read in one of the papers of the day, "but the eventful life of Napoleon's mother deserves a passing word. During the twenty years of her exile, her every action seemed to contribute a fitting frame to the greatness of her son. She never lost the pride and calm consistency which distinguishes her compatriots, and with her sharp Italian eyes that nothing could deceive, she watched him climb step by step to the highest pinnacle, as though it were already his own. His genius caused her no astonishment, she looked upon it as part of herself, and though she chose to lead a retired life in France, she was none the less a woman of considerable ability and exalted character. The great Emperor frequently expressed this opinion, which has been endorsed by the genuine universal respect that surrounded her in Rome."

In another paper we read:

"There is not a woman in history who has

been so overwhelmed by the caprices of fate, certainly not one who has been subjected to greater trials, or forced to drink her cup of suffering to the very dregs."

Still a third paper observed :

"In her advancing years she had been compelled to accept a home among the enemies of her name, and to witness the joy which they experienced on the death of her son and grandson. But she bore this sorrow with the same calm dignity that she opposed to the threats of Paoli. She was modest in prosperity, uncomplaining in the day of adversity, and possessed of such strong self-control that she never even named the names of her adversaries."

* * * * * *

Other members of the family soon followed Letitia to the grave, among them her daughter-in-law Queen Hortense, and a couple of years later Cardinal Fesch, who seemed to have lost the wish to live after the death of his sister. He sank under the ravages of cancer, that fearful malady which had already smitten Letitia's nearest and dearest. He attained the highest post in the College of Cardinals, and died May 13th, 1839, at the age of seventy-seven. Five days later occurred the death of Caroline Murat, ex-Queen of Naples. The Cardinal's will contained the following wishes :

"I bequeath 200,000 francs to build a church

on the south side of the college which I founded in Ajaccio; and I desire that my sister's dust and my own shall repose in this church, among our dear fellow-citizens."

His principal heir, Joseph Bonaparte, excused himself on the ground of banishment from fulfilling these wishes, and did not build the church; but in the summer of 1851 the two bodies were at length removed to Corsica, and in 1857 Napoleon III. ordered that the building should be erected. The altar is adorned with a valuable figure of Christ, of great artistic merit, which Napoleon had brought as a trophy after his first campaign in Italy, and given to his mother, who later on presented it to her native city. The coffin of the so-called "Niobe of Corsica" stands in the middle of the vault, and round her repose the Cardinal and several other members of her own ancestral family. A magnificent black marble slab is inserted over the entrance to the vault, and bears the following inscription in gold:

"MARIA LETITIA RAMOLINO BONAPARTE.
MATER REGUM."

"Madame Mère was not a great lady but a great woman. As that, and as the mother of a greater man, she may be well content to go down the ages."

S. G. TALLENTYRE.

W. JOLLY & SONS, PRINTERS ABERDEEN.

OBITUARY.

Madame Bonaparte.

Lately. At Rome, aged 82, Madame Letitia Bonaparte, mother of the great Napoleon.

It was in the middle of civil discord, fights, and skirmishes that Carlo Bonaparte married Letitia Ramolini, one of the most beautiful young women in the Island of Corsica. She possessed a great firmness of character, and partook the dangers of her husband during the years of civil war. She is said to have accompanied him on horseback in some military expeditions, or perhaps hasty flights, shortly before the birth of the future Emperor; and on the very day of that occurrence, having been induced to attend mass (it being the festival of the Assumption), she was obliged to return home immediately, and, as there was no time to prepare a bed or bed-room, she was delivered of the future conqueror upon a temporary couch prepared for her accommodation, and covered with an ancient piece of tapestry representing the heroes of the Iliad.

Though left a widow in the prime of life, Feb. 24, 1785, she had already borne her husband thirteen children, of whom five sons and three daughters survived him. 1. Joseph, the eldest, who, though placed by his brother in an obnoxious situation, as intrusive King of Spain, held the reputation of a good and moderate man. He now bears the name of Count Survilliers; he has lived latterly in America, and is now resident in this country; 2. Napoleon himself; 3. Lucien, scarce inferior to his brother in ambition and talent, but who disdained to become one of his brother's tributary sovereigns; now Prince of Canino; 4. Louis, once King of Holland, now Count de St. Leu, and resident in Italy; and 5. Jerome, once King of Westphalia, now Duke of Montfort, in Wurtemburg; having married a sister of the King of Wurtemburg, and cousin to the Emperor of Russia, his palace at Rome is the rendezvous for all the distinguished travellers from the North of Europe who visit Italy. The females were: 1. Maria-Anne, afterwards Eliza, Grand Duchess of Tuscany; she died at Trieste in 1820; 2. Pauline, Princess of Borghese; she died at Florence in 1825; and 3. Caroline, wife of Murat, King of Naples; and afterwards of Marshal Macdonald; now living in Austria as Countess of Lipano.

Letitia's mother married secondly a Swiss officer in the French service, named Fesch, and was by him mother of Giuseppo Fesch, who was created a Cardinal by Napoleon in 1803, and is still living.

The death of Madame Bonaparte was reported some months before it occurred, and a statement of her will was then circulated by the newspapers. This is now contradicted, and the following is given as part of a letter written by Letitia herself to one of her friends:—"It is, no doubt, by means of the newspapers that you learnt that all my family had assembled around me. The news is as true as that of the millions of money with which the editors endow me, and which they make me dispose of in so strange a mode. I am as isolated as when you were at Rome. The Cardinal only comes to see me whenever his health will allow him. All my children are removed from the town in which I live; and, as to the immense fortune which is so generously attributed to me, sensible people might believe *that*, if I were the mother of a banker, or a gambler on 'Change; they will never believe it when it relates to the mother of Napoleon. It was to embellish and enrich France that the Emperor employed the millions which he acquired by victory, and not to gorge his family. My health is still very delicate, and I continue to keep my chamber. Your affectionate Letitia."

"*Rome, Oct.* 4.

The Sunday Times. 10th December 1922.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

Sunday Times

No. 8.] LONDON, SUNDAY, DEC. 8, 1822. [Price 7d.

It is very evident that the most alarming circumstance in the present political state of Europe is the overbearing and increasing power of Russia. Russia is not only absolutely the most powerful Continental State, but from the vast extent of its present territories it has the most ready opportunities for external aggrandisement.

LAST MOMENTS OF THE MOTHER OF BONAPARTE.—The evening preceding her death, she called together all her household. She was supported on white velvet pillows; her bed was crimson damask, and in the centre hung a crown decorated with flowers. The whole of the apartment was lighted in grand style. She called her servants, one after another, to her bedside, who knelt, and kissed her extended hand, which was skinny, and covered with a profusion of rings. To her Chief Director of Finance, Juan Berosa, she said: "Juan, my blessing go with thee and thine!" To Maria Belgrade, her waiting maid, she said, "Go to Jerome, he will take care of thee. When my grandson is *Emperor of France* he will make thee a great woman." She then called Colonel Darley to her bedside; he had attended her in all her fortunes, and, in Napoleon's Will, has assigned him a donation of £14,000. "You," said she, "have been a good friend to me and my family; I have left you what will make you happy. Never forget my grandson; and what he and you may arrive at is beyond my discerning; but you will both be great!" She then called in all junior servants, and with a pencil, as their names were called, marked down a sum of money to be given to each. They were then dismissed, and she then declared that she had done with the world, and requested water. She washed her hands, and laid down upon her pillow. Her attendants found her dead, with her hand under her head, and a prayer-book upon her breast. Thus perished the mother of one who has been a meteor on earth, and a blazing star to direct others!

Last Moments of the Mother of Bonaparte.

The Sunday Times. 17.XII.22

Sir,—The paragraph under this title in "A Hundred Years Ago" (10th inst.) perpetuates an amusing mistake, for the lady's last moments must have continued nearly fourteen years, as she died on February 3, 1836: *Annual Register*, 1836, p. 190. No doubt your reproduction of "yourself" is accurate, for other London periodicals made the same mistake, e.g., the *Gentlemen's Magazine* in its "Obituary" in November, 1822 ("Oct. 10, at Marseilles"—both wrong) and *Annual Register*, under "Deaths," Nov. 29 ("At Rome," which turned out to be correct).

I suppose she had more children Kings and Queens (and reigning Princesses) than any other person who ever lived.

HERMAN COHEN.

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